

**SCHOOL EVALUATION: AN EXPLORATION OF THE
IMPACT OF EVALUATION PROCESSES ON THE STAFF
IN AN IRISH POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL**

By

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B.A. M.Sc.

A Dissertation

Presented in Fulfilment of the Requirements

For the Award of

Professional Doctorate in Education

Ed.D.

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January 2015

Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctorate in Education is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Patrick and Bridie Ladden who both passed away during the course of this research programme and who were always proud of the achievements of all their children. May they rest in peace. We love you and miss you.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to all the teachers and colleagues with whom I have worked over the past thirty years; especially those in my own school who agreed to participate in this study. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. Padraic Kavanagh for his support over the past four years. Many thanks also, to the teachers in the local primary school who facilitated the pilot project in their wonderful school.

I would also like to acknowledge a number of people who made this thesis possible. Firstly, I would like to thank John Hartnett. His help, patience and expertise with words were a source of great comfort while writing this thesis. I would also like to thank my classmate Martin Stynes for his help with the work, especially his expertise with technology. Many thanks also to Siobhan Woods who helped me with the analysis of the quantitative data. I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Senan Cooke for his friendship and encouragement to complete this thesis and my supervisor Prof. Gerry McNamara for his help throughout the Doctoral Programme.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my wife, Helen for all the encouragement, patience and love, over the last four years, and more. Thanks also to my two daughters Gillian and Sarah for all their love and support.

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Acronyms

AYP	Adequate Yearly Progress
BOM	Board of Management
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSRQ	Comprehensive School Reform Quality Centre
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES	Department of Education and Skills
EBP	Evidence based practice
ERST	Edmund Rice Schools Trust
ESEA	Elementary and Secondary Education Act
EU	European Union
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ISEP	International School Effectiveness Project
LAOS	Looking at Our Schools
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied Programme
MLL	Management Leadership and Learning
NCLB	No Child Left Behind Act
NGRT	National Group Reading Test
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Ofsted	The Office for Standards in Education
PCSP	Primary Curriculum Support Programme
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers

PISA	Programme on Student Assessment Project
PLC	Professional Learning Communities
PPDS	The Primary Professional Development Service
SDPI	The School Development Planning Initiative
SDPS	School Development Planning Service
SEF	Self-Evaluation Form
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timed
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
SYNEVA	Synergy of Internal and External Evaluation of Schools
(TIMSS)	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TQM	Total Quality Management
TYO	Transition Year Option
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
VPTP	The Vocational Preparation and Training Programmes
WSE	Whole School Evaluation

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Abstract

School Evaluation: An exploration of the impact of evaluation on the teaching staff of an Irish post-primary school

Brian Ladden

This study researches the topic of evaluation in the Irish school system. In particular, it investigates the development and implementation of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) in an Irish post-primary school and assesses the impact of Whole School Evaluation (WSE) on the teaching staff in the same school. The perceptions of the teaching staff are analysed to assess the impact of the two processes on the school. The two systems of evaluation are examined for insights into how they affect factors such as leadership, the autonomy and empowerment of teachers, teamwork and the satisfaction levels of teachers; factors that have been cited as being important to the delivery of a high standard of education provision.

School evaluation is a complex and multi-dimensional construct that is best studied in its natural setting. The study uses a mixed-method, case-study design within the constructivist research paradigm. The main research methods used are survey questionnaires, interviews and a focus group.

The overall conclusion of this study is that both forms of evaluation impact significantly on teachers and can help improve their practices. Both processes can satisfy the accountability requirements of the stakeholders of the school and simultaneously help to improve and develop the performance of the teachers and the school. The two forms of evaluation are beneficial to the school in differing ways. The strengths of one process can compensate for the weaknesses of the other.

While the findings support the overall thrust of the Department of Education and Skills (DES), viz. a dual approach to evaluation - self-evaluation coupled with light touch external evaluation, a number of issues are raised regarding how the process is currently implemented. The study found a disconnect between the stated need to embed SSE in the development of a professional planning process in the school and the narrow focus of gathering quantitative data and setting numerical targets. In relation to WSE, this study identifies a need to establish a more equitable and supportive relationship between the inspectorate and schools; one in which the inspectorate act as mentors to teachers and engage in discussion with them on how best to improve teaching and learning. The real strength of self-evaluation is its potential to improve the empowerment levels of teachers and to increase their capacity for change. It also facilitates the engagement of teachers in ongoing reflection and enables a discourse on the broader issues relating to education that creates a culture of learning and school improvement.

It was beyond the scope of this study to make a direct link between school evaluation and the improvement of student outcomes. This however, is recommended as a topic for further research.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This study researches the topic of evaluation in the Irish school system. In particular, it investigates the development and implementation of School Self-Evaluation (SSE) in an Irish posts primary school and assesses the impact of Whole School Evaluation (WSE) on the teaching staff in the same school. The perceptions of the teaching staff are analysed to assess the impact of the two processes on the school. The two systems of evaluation are examined for insights into how they affect factors such as leadership, the autonomy and empowerment of teachers, teamwork and the satisfaction levels of teachers; factors that have been cited as being important to the delivery of a high standard of education provision.

The study uses a case study research design to explore the two processes. This allows the process of SSE to be studied as it develops, as well as allowing the impact of the WSE to be examined as it takes place in the school. This approach also allows a rare opportunity to scrutinise the new approach adopted by the Department of Education and Skills that of robust internal evaluation to promote development and professional autonomy, coupled with external evaluation to ensure accountability.

1.2 The Research Question

The focus of this research is on evaluation in an Irish school setting, and how evaluation impacts on teaching staff in the school. While the original intention was to research school self-evaluation alone, it quickly became obvious that the two topics of SSE and WSE are inextricably linked, and the decision was made to broaden the scope of the research to include both approaches.

The aim of the thesis is to gain an understanding of the nature of evaluation, and to ascertain how evaluation affects the teaching staff and whether it impacts in any meaningful way on their performance in the school. WSE and SSE are examined to

assess how they affect factors such as the autonomy and empowerment levels of teachers; the teamwork and leadership in the school and the level of job satisfaction of teachers. These are all factors that have been cited as being important to the delivery of a high standard of education provision (McNamara and O'Hara 2008). The ultimate aim of this study is to experiment with new and innovative approaches to empowering teachers and schools to develop their capacity to engage in self-evaluation and to bring about meaningful improvements in their school.

The key question driving this study is:

What impact has school evaluation on the teaching staff in an Irish post-primary school?

The objectives of the study are:

- To review the research relevant to the topic of evaluation
- To implement a pilot self-evaluation process in a local school
- To research the self-evaluation process in the pilot school
- To develop and implement a self-evaluation process in the researcher's own school
- To measure the levels of empowerment of the teachers in the schools before and after the self-evaluation process
- To use semi-structured interviews to examine the perceptions of the participants in relation to the evaluation processes
- To analyse the findings from the research, draw conclusions from the analysis and make recommendations as to how evaluation can best be utilised to improve educational provision in the school

1.3 Rationale for choice of topic

Evaluation has become an integral part of everyday life in most walks of life today. Practices such as project management, budget management; human resources management, organizational and management development all use various forms of evaluation and appraisal systems, and are commonplace in most organisations today.

Evaluation manifests itself in many forms, such as quality assurance (including 360-degree management appraisals), satisfaction surveys, workplace assessments and accreditations. Managers and employees are increasingly involved in evaluations, either formally, having to deal with the planning, execution and implementation of evaluation, or informally, dealing with the constitutive effects of evaluations (Dahler-Larsen, 2007). Evaluations help to build a better social world through improvements in programs, policies and social conditions, to contribute meaningfully to the well being of people (Shaw, Green and Mark, 2006). The ultimate aim of evaluation is to help stakeholders to improve and to develop both the organisation and themselves. Evidence suggests however, that many organisations do not make use of evaluation findings and furthermore, evaluation reports bear little fruit and remain largely unimplemented. There are multiple reasons for this: A lack of capacity or resources to implement the recommendations is often a major contributory factor and political considerations are sometimes instrumental in determining why organisations choose to disregard the findings of some evaluations.

In recent years research has demonstrated a growing awareness that evaluations often have undesired effects and these may sometimes be counterproductive (Nørholm 2008). In schools, for example, there is much evidence that inspections can have a very damaging impact on the morale of teachers and can undermine their professionalism (Leithwood et al., 2000). Teachers' attitudes to inspection are generally perceived as negative and inspection itself is deemed to be a stressful process (Döbert, 2004). There is a wide range of evaluation systems in operation in many different countries and a wealth of studies has been conducted on the topic. A review of the literature reveals little consensus on what constitutes the most effective form of evaluation. SSE might currently be considered 'flavour of the month' in most developed countries but there appears to be little agreement among researchers and administrators however, in relation to how it should be carried out or about what it will achieve. More traditional forms of external inspection, as an alternative approach to SSE, will also be investigated in this project, particularly in light of their negative publicity and the fact that most OECD countries still utilise them in some form in their inspection regimes.

There are a number of reasons that suggest SSE is worth researching. Most countries in the EU, and wider afield, have examined ways to improve the performance of schools and are currently focusing on evaluation as a means of ensuring accountability and the

efficient use of resources (Faubert, 2009). A variety of approaches have typically been categorised as either external and internal in their methodologies. In Ireland, external evaluation usually takes the form of WSE, which has come to be widely accepted as a feature of Irish school life since its inception in 2003 (McNamara and O'Hara 2006). The main form of internal evaluation is SSE and this typically involves the school stakeholders evaluating their own processes and procedures. Unlike WSE, self-evaluation is slow to gain popularity or acceptance in Irish schools. Some reasons cited initially related to the lack of clear guidelines and structure, as well as insufficient support from the Department of Education and Science (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). The issue of clear written guidelines appears to have been addressed but the structures and support are still reported to be lacking. This research will explore some of the barriers impeding the implementation of school self-evaluation, and will make recommendations that assist in overcoming them.

The WSE system, although now an accepted form of evaluation in Irish schools, is not without its critics. As an external system of evaluation, it involves the State school inspectorate entering the school environment, making evaluations in relation to what they observe and making recommendations on how performance could be improved. While this satisfies some commentators who lobby for accountability in education, many others, including researchers in education, argue that external forms of inspection are less effective than internal approaches in delivering improvements in schools and that the best people to evaluate a system are the people who are active within the system on a daily basis (Faubert, 2009). This study seeks to examine both SSE and WSE to gain insights as to their potential to bring about improvements in one particular school. The study also provides the opportunity to examine Nevo's (2001) assertion that both systems can co-exist and are necessary to improve educational provision.

Self-evaluation is a recent initiative in Ireland and because so few schools have introduced it to date, little information or guidance is available as to how best to operate it in individual schools. By the time of the commencement of this research in 2011- eleven years after SSE was introduced in 2003- very little information or resources relating to the topic had been produced by the Department of Education and Skills. The *School Self-evaluation Guidelines for Post Primary Schools* were not published until late 2012. To date, the Department of Education and Skills (DES) has conducted a limited number of in-service courses but attendance has been restricted to Principals and

to Vice-Principals only. This study seeks to discover how a greater number of schools and staffs can be encouraged to engage in self-evaluation.

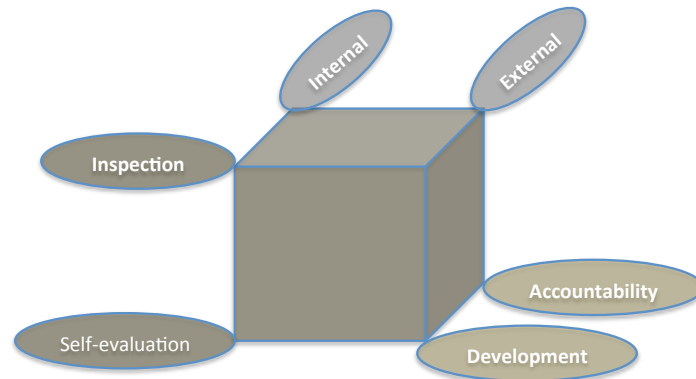
Finally, this thesis seeks to augment the existing body of research relating to school evaluation, especially within the context of Irish schools. Ireland has little experience of the rigorous, external inspections systems operated in many other countries such as the US and the UK. Evaluation in post-primary schools, in particular, has been almost non-existent until recently (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). As SSE is such a recent phenomenon in Irish schools, very few studies have been conducted on the subject. In particular, few if any Irish studies have focused on the impact of evaluation on teachers; those who operate at the interface and who grapple directly with the issues raised in evaluation processes, with recommendations and with their implementation.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

A perusal of the literature on school evaluation and on self-evaluation in particular, reveals an ongoing debate into the nature of evaluation and how it should be carried out. A conflict has emerged between those who favour internal evaluation and its potential to develop an organisation, while there are others who insist that evaluation is about ensuring accountability and that it should be carried out by an external agent in order to ensure transparency (Feubert, 2009). McNamara and O'Hara (2008) suggest that there have been 'a number of attempts to develop a comprehensive framework of school evaluation that includes all elements of the emerging dialogue in a structure that demonstrates their relationship' (p.107). They identify the work of researchers such as John MacBeath in collaboration with Schratz as being particularly important (McNamara and O'Hara 2008, p.107).

MacBeath and colleagues designed a model of self-valuation that attempted to illustrate the multi-dimensional perspective of school development and evaluation (1999). The framework was titled 'The Cube Model of Evaluation and updated in 2000.

Figure 1.1: The Cube Model of Evaluation



(MacBeath et.al. 2000, p.93)

This model proposes three inter-related dimensions to school evaluation for internal and external evaluation, self-evaluation and inspection and development and accountability. MacBeath et al. contend that within the three dimensions there is a ‘particular point that defines the nature and describes the process of evaluation’ (2000, p.93).

McNamara and O’Hara (2008) assert that this construct of evaluation elicits a number of important questions. Firstly, how can a culture of school improvement which emphasises development and trust, interact with an accountability system that prioritises measurement, standards and sanctions? Secondly, how will the internal priorities of a school match the public accountability required by external agents? Thirdly, how can the ‘snapshot’ of a school system produced by the inspectorate be attuned with the data produced by the school community in an SSE process?

The answers to these questions are of interest to educators in most countries that attempt to develop an appropriate and effective evaluation system. They are also of interest to this researcher in attempting to develop an SSE process in the school that will satisfy the requirements of the Department, the parents and students in the school, while simultaneously motivating the teachers and other staff members in the school to bring about improvements to the school. Therefore, the three dimensions illustrated by MacBeath will be used as a theoretical framework to support this study.

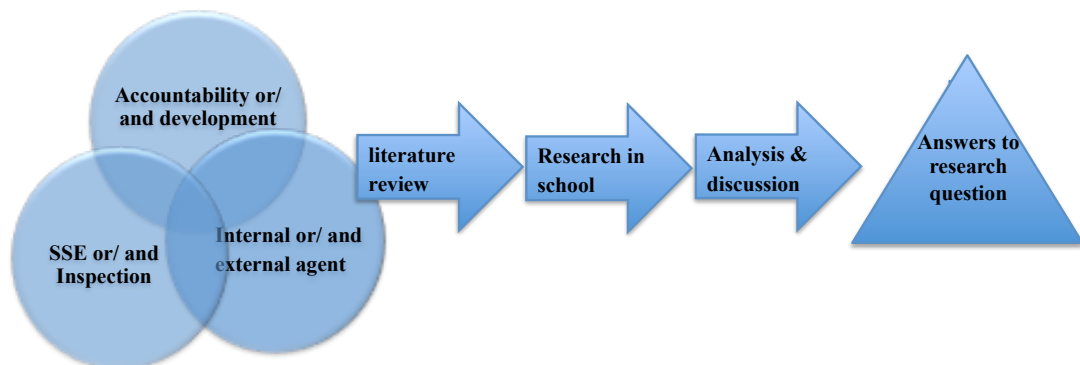
In an attempt to answer the substantive research question of, ‘*What impact has school evaluation on the teaching staff in an Irish post-primary school?*’ this study will attempt to answer three related questions emerging from the construct of evaluation put forward by MacBeath et al. (2000):

1. *What is the purpose of school evaluation- development or accountability?*
2. *Who should carry out the evaluation - external or internal agents?*
3. *What form should the evaluation take - inspection or self-evaluation?*

The research process taken in this study is presented in figure 1.3

The study will research the views of the teaching staff on the three inter-connected dimensions of evaluation in order to gain an understanding of the nature of evaluation and to ascertain their perceptions of the merits or otherwise of the processes of SSE and WSE.

Figure 1.2: The Research Process



1.5 The Schools

Two schools participated in the study. A primary school with approximately 220 pupils operated as a pilot research site while the main research site was located in a post-primary school with 500 pupils. Both schools are in the north Dublin area and the primary school is a local feeder school to the secondary school.

1.5.1 The Research School

The main Research School is a voluntary secondary school operating under the trusteeship of the Catholic Christian Brothers. It was founded in 1966 in temporary accommodation and moved to its current location. It was built as a response to the introduction of free education by the then Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, in May 1967. The school is a member of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). The school serves a diverse catchment area and it participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), which focuses on addressing and prioritising the educational needs of children and of young people from disadvantaged communities. In 1971, only 54 students entered first year. The school quickly grew to a total of 750 students at the turn of the century. Enrolment had declined significantly for a number of years subsequently but there are indications of a recent upward trend. The present enrolment stands at almost 500 boys. Initially, part-time teachers were employed from the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) who remunerated out of school funds in order to provide the practical subjects that were deemed necessary by the staff. Thus emerged an underlying educational philosophy in the school; the provision by a Brothers' School, of a comprehensive curriculum serving the local community. The school now has a teaching staff of around 40, including full-time and part-time teachers. There are six post holders, excluding the Principal, Deputy Principal and five Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) in the school. The school provides a choice of 18-20 subjects to the students.

During the recession years of the 1980's, in spite of increases in class sizes, the school introduced some important educational initiatives. The Vocational Preparation and Training Programme (VPTP) was introduced in response to the economic circumstances of the time with a view to alleviating a youth unemployment crisis. The school also offers the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA) and the Transition Year Option (TYO) for students who have completed the Junior Certificate examination, and there is a special class for students on the autism spectrum.

In 1987, the Trustees made the decision to appoint a Board of Management to the School that would operate in cycles of three years. The Board, comprising of representatives of the Trustees, staff and parents, assist the Principal in the managing of the school. In August 2000, reflecting the decline in vocations to the Christian Brothers

Order, the current Principal was appointed as the first lay Principal in the school. The school engaged in development planning around the turn of the century. The Development Plan was devised in collaboration with the entire staff but was not updated on a systematic basis thereafter. A committee of staff members devised a DEIS Plan for the school and this has continued in its development and implementation as part of the school plan and as whole school policy. Prior to the SSE, many of the current staff members were inexperienced in collaborative planning and they had little involvement in decision making in the school.

1.5.2 The Pilot School

The pilot school is a local feeder primary school for the Research School. It was chosen as the subject of the pilot study because it is a small school of some 220 students. There are 11 classes, four learning support / resource teachers and a Principal. A Deputy Principal and teachers in middle management 'special duties' posts were also involved. A primary school was deliberately chosen for the pilot study because it is a smaller and more homogeneous sample group and it should allow a self-evaluation process to be implemented in a short time period. The profile of the students, in terms of their background and economic circumstances, is similar to that of the Research School. The school is also a DEIS school and contends with many of the issues that challenge the Researcher's School. It is also convenient to the researcher's workplace, there are good relations with the Principal and this in turn facilitates access to the school and to the staff.

1.5.3 The Researcher

The researcher has been a teacher in the Research Schools since 1987 and has recently been appointed to the position of SSE Co-ordinator in the school with responsibility to develop and lead an SSE process. He obtained an M.Sc. Degree in Education and Training Management in DCU in 2006 completing a dissertation on Empowerment as a Management Strategy. This interest in leadership led him to take a career break from teaching and work for three years as an associate with a management training consultancy firm that specialises in employee empowerment. He also works on a voluntary basis as a tutor trainer with the Gaelic Athletic Association where he prepares

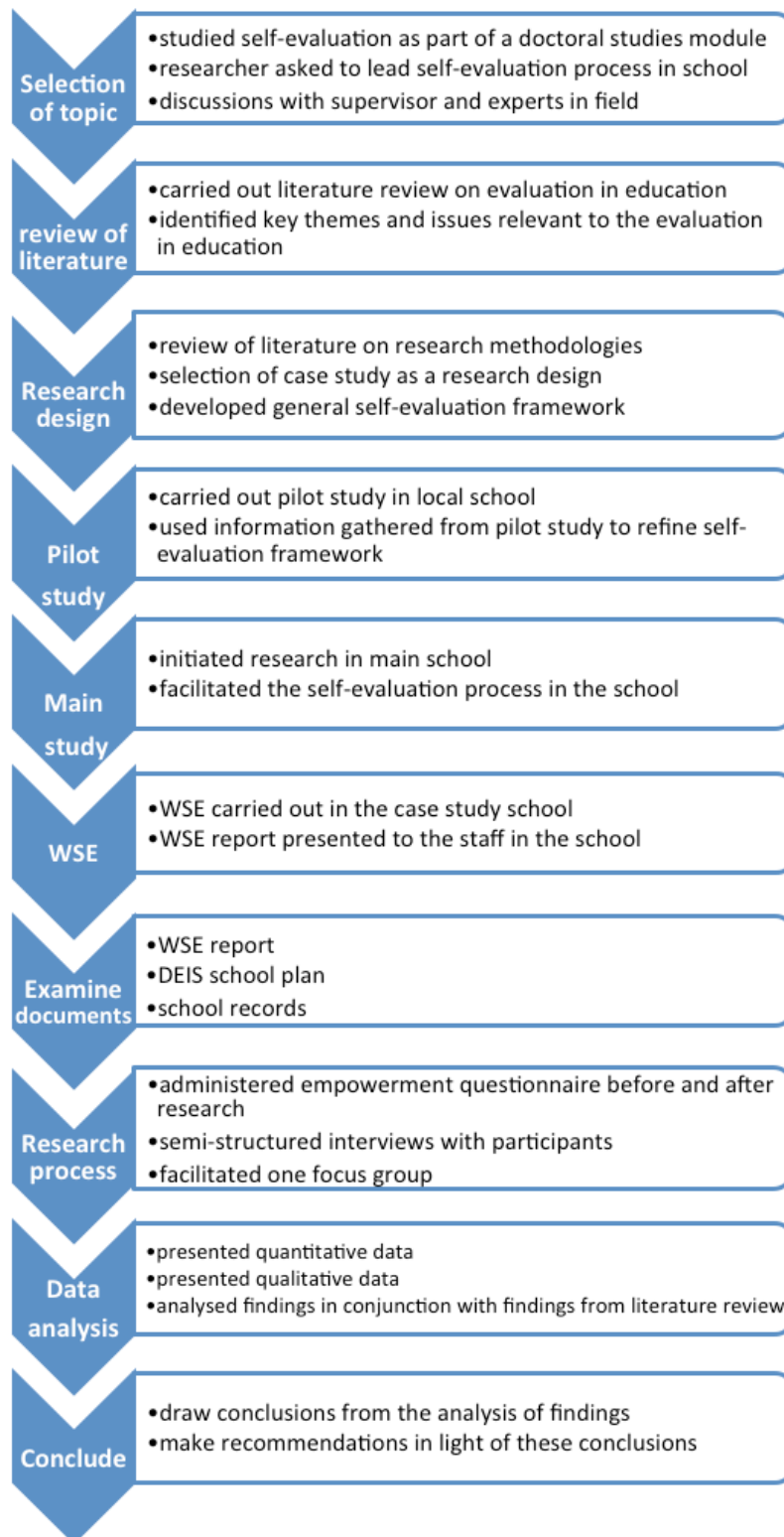
tutors to deliver coaching courses to their coaches. This raises a number of issues that need to be considered when carrying out the research. These activities have provided the researcher with a background of skills and experiences through developing programmes and facilitating workshops for adult learners and such competencies may

not be available to every school. Also, the researcher is a member of the professional body whose daily practices are under study and, as such, he is deemed to be an insider researcher. The insider is defined as an individual who possesses intimate knowledge of the community and of its members due to previous and ongoing association with that community and with its members (Labaree 2002, p.100). It has been argued that insiders have access to privileged information and to particular forms of knowledge (Griffith 1998, p.362). However, insider research can be far from straightforward and can often raise ethical and methodological dilemmas (Labaree, 2002; Mercer, 2006). The dichotomy of the insider/ outsider researcher will be examined in more detail in the methodology chapter.

1.6 Roadmap of the Research

This research journey commenced when the researcher undertook a course of study on self-evaluation as a taught module on the professional Doctorate programme at Dublin City University. The resulting paper recognised the potential for self-evaluation to deliver real improvements within an organisation. After completing a minor research undertaking on self-evaluation and a pilot project in another school, the researcher wished to explore further the potential for self-evaluation to impact positively on the teaching staff in his own school. The opportunity to research the topic was discussed with the Principal and the researcher was asked to co-ordinate the SSE process in the school as a result. In the course of the research the school experienced an external inspection or WSE and the opportunity to research both processes at first hand became available. Figure 1.1 below outlines the stages undertaken by the researcher in exploring the research topic:

Figure 1.3: Road map of research journey



1.7 Layout of Dissertation

Chapter one introduces the thesis and sets the background and context for the study. It presents the research questions that drive the research and outlines the aims and objectives that give it a focus. The rationale for its choice as a research topic is presented. The theoretical framework that gives the thesis its structure is explained. The profile of the research school and of the pilot school are described and the background of the researcher is provided. Finally, the roadmap of the research journey and a layout of the dissertation are given.

Chapter two conducts a review of literature relevant to the research question. Key questions relating to evaluation, and to its capacity for improving the quality of education provision in a school are addressed. Various efforts to improve education provision, such as school improvement theory, school effectiveness and the creating of communities of learning are explored with a view to gaining insights into best practice relating to improving educational provision. The literature review concludes by narrowing the investigation to specifically focus on inspection and on school self-evaluation.

Chapter three describes the methodological approach adopted in this research. The philosophical paradigms that underpin the research are explained. The rationale for selecting a pragmatic, mixed method approach to the research is presented. The use of survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gather data is described. The use of a case study research design is explained and justified. Issues such as the validity of the research, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study are also addressed.

Chapter four presents the findings of the research. The quantitative data and the qualitative data are presented separately. They are then analysed, compared and contrasted in the light of the findings from the literature review.

Chapter five concludes the research. Key themes arising from the research are outlined, conclusions and recommendations are presented, based upon the researcher's analysis and interpretation of the empirical evidence.

1.8 Summary

This chapter introduces the thesis and sets the background and context for the study. The research questions and the objectives of the research undertaking are presented. A brief overview of the topic of evaluation is detailed, and a rationale for its choice as a research topic is given. A number of trends in education that may be considered relevant to the research topic are explored. In particular, the evolution of school evaluation in Ireland is examined. The background and context of the school involved in the research is presented. Finally, the theoretical framework underpinning the study is explained and the research process is outlined. The following section will review the literature to gain an overview of insights leading researchers in the field of school evaluation have on the research question.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating to the topic of school evaluation in the context of the research question. Evaluation is defined and the current interest in evaluation as a process is explicated. Key issues relating to evaluation are studied. Various efforts to improve educational provision, such as school improvement theory, school effectiveness and the creation of communities of learning are explored, with the purpose of gaining insights into best practice. The literature review concludes by narrowing the focus on external school inspection processes and on school self-evaluation as forms of quality assurance in education.

2.2 Evaluation defined

Before embarking on a study it is worth defining what exactly is meant by evaluation and describing the origins of the recent interest in school evaluation. The dictionary suggests evaluation relates to determining ‘the importance, effectiveness or worth of something’ or to ascertaining the value of something (Free Online Dictionary, 2015). Patton (1987) gives a more complete definition by suggesting that evaluation is a process that critically examines a programme. It typically involves collecting and analysing information about a programme’s activities, characteristics, and outcomes. Its purpose is to make judgments about a programme, to improve its effectiveness, and/or to inform programming decisions. The historical development of evaluation is difficult to accurately pin-point and to comprehensively trace because different types of evaluation have been used informally by humans for thousands of years. Scriven noted that ‘evaluation is a very young discipline - although it is a very old practice’ (1996, p395). Evaluation, as we understand it today has developed over the past 200 years, and has matured greatly in the past 20 years into an established field of study.

2.3 Explaining the interest in evaluation

The birth of the contemporary phase of evaluation was attributed to the passing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 as part of the War on Poverty by the Kennedy administration in the U.S. Massive investment was directed at helping the disadvantaged in areas such as education. Schools quickly realised however, that existing evaluation tools and strategies were unfit for purpose. Standardised tests ranked students on attainment and ability but were of little use in diagnosing the needs of disadvantaged students who lagged behind their middle class peers (Madaus and Stufflebeam, 2000). A number of important studies on evaluation reported mainly negative findings on evaluation and education. Coleman's famous study, 'Equality Educational Opportunity,' for example, received attention mainly for his criticism that 'schools bring little influence to bear on a child's achievement that is independent of his background and general social context' (Coleman et al. 1966, p.325).

During the 1970s, the discipline of evaluation emerged as a profession. Universities responded to the increased importance attached to evaluation by offering courses in evaluation methodology. Professional associations were formed and evaluation standards were developed. In addition, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation developed criteria for personnel evaluation and around this time many new conceptualisations of evaluation began to emerge. These recognised the need 'to evaluate goals, look at inputs, examine implementation and delivery services' as well as measuring intended and unintended outcomes of the programme (Madaus and Stufflebeam 2000, p.14). In many developed countries, accountability and standardisation are now the norm in most areas of service delivery and this typically gives rise to issues of evaluation.

2.3.1 Focus on evaluation

The increased interest in evaluation is now a world-wide phenomenon. Michael Power, Professor of Accounting at London School of Economics, suggests that it is not just education that has experienced this focus on evaluation; 'In every area of social and economic life there is more formalised checking, assessment, scrutiny, verification and evaluation'. Powers defined our era as the 'Age of Inspection' (cited in McNamara and O'Hara 2008, p.3).

There are a number of reasons for the current focus on evaluation. Some researchers suggest that the oil crisis in the early seventies, and the perceived failure of Keynesian social democracy around that time, led to the desire to reform what was perceived as a stifling, inefficient and expensive public sector (Thrupp and Willmott, 2003). Others maintain that it is generated by the cost cutting pressures of globalisation, as countries worldwide attempt to control the enormous amount of money spent on their ever expanding public services (Giddins, 2004). Governments want to increase accountability and to improve transparency in order to implement value for the money initiatives in their public service, particularly in the area of education. Almost all countries have a finite amount of resources at their disposal, with a seemingly infinite number of interest groups vying for such resources. Decision-makers and policy-makers demand seemingly better and more comprehensive information in order to help them to optimise their resource allocation.

The increased influence of the EU in particular, impacts on all areas of public policy and education generally operates at a high cost. Lion and Martini (2006) assert that a culture of evaluation embedded in the EU is increasingly being incorporated into the public sector. Policies and curriculum issues are influenced and often determined at EU level, and evaluation is seen as a means of managing education in pursuit of Europe's objective to become a knowledge economy. Evaluation findings are used to justify the huge amounts of the EU's budget that are invested in education in these countries (Boyle, 1997).

The outcomes of evaluation processes in the EU contribute to the development of education, employment and social policies of member states and the European Commission is putting increased pressure on countries to tackle rising unemployment through the improvement of educational provision in its member states (Grek et al, 2009). There is also a rising demand for a more professional and scientific approach to measuring both the quality of the functioning of schools and the performance of teachers in them (Meuret and Marlais, 2003). In addition, schools are increasingly asked to address issues other than educational standards, particularly the integration of children with special needs, the inclusion of immigrant children and the implementation of programmes to combat educational disadvantage (OECD, 2007a). These pose a challenge for schools as appropriate methods are sought for evaluating success in such complex situations.

Another phenomenon that has driven the evaluation agenda is the relatively recent global public interest in comparing education systems, and the emergence of evaluation projects such as the International School Effectiveness Project (ISEP), The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the highly influential Programme on Student Assessment Project (PISA). As countries compete for their share of the global economic largesse and are searching for ways to attract large multi-national investment, they look to the hard data of education standards to provide a competitive edge. Unsurprisingly, Christie (2003) suggests that processes of evaluating standards in education and in particular, the intense scrutiny of the performance of teachers, have become a global obsession.

It would seem that Ireland's education system has not escaped this intensive focus on evaluation. McNamara and O'Hara (2008) point out that national partnership programmes such as *Work and Competitiveness 1998*, *Prosperity and Fairness 1*, *Sustaining Progress 2003-2005*, and *The National Agreement Towards 2016* are littered with terms such as 'efficiency', 'effectiveness', 'performance', 'quality', 'flexibility', 'rationalisation', and 'evaluation'. The authors also state that recent legislation, including the 1997 Universities Act, The Education Act 1998, and the Qualifications Education and Training Act 1999, all contain specific sections requiring evaluations of programmes and institutions. It would be determined that there is a growing consensus that evaluation is perceived a key element to improving the quality of education provision.

2.4 Improving education provision

The notion of improving organisations in a systematic way originated in the writings of W.E. Deming, Joseph Juran, and Kouro Ishikawa as far back as the 1940's. These founding fathers of the concept of Total Quality Management (TQM), introduced a range of practices that revolutionised the notion of providing a quality service to the customer. TQM is a deliberate systematic approach to achieving appropriate levels of quality in a consistent fashion that meet or exceeds the needs and wants of the customer (Deming, 1985). TQM can be interpreted as a philosophy of continual improvement or alternatively as a methodology or a set of tools and techniques to effect that improvement. Quality is defined as the 'the standard of something as measured against things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something' (Oxford Dictionaries

Online, 2012). It is therefore a relative term and not an absolute. Parasuraman et al. (1985) feels that quality involves meeting and exceeding expectations and customer satisfaction. Essential elements of their definition also emphasise delivering reliable and consistent standards of service. The element of meeting the expectations of the client underpins the recent trend towards marketisation and managerialism that is prominent in education today. These elements are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

2.4.1 Principles of quality assurance

A number of core principles are highlighted by various researchers as being crucial to developing a quality focused organisation. Deming, with his 14 point quality management plan, suggests that a culture of quality needs to be created in an organisation. He believes that organisations need to empower their workers to embrace the quality agenda. Empowered employees have the vision, autonomy and ownership to take responsibility for continual quality assurance. Studies show that empowerment is positively related to improved organisational performance such as; in-role performance (Bartram and Casimir, 2007); customer service (Peccei and Rosenthal, 2001); voicing of ideas and helping (Cirka, 2000); and innovative behaviours (Alge et al., 2006).

Researchers agree that strong leadership is needed to promote the quality agenda. Peters and Waterman (1982) suggest that organisations need visionary leaders who can inspire employees and who can create a clear vision for the direction of the organisation. Peters (1989) asserts that organisations need to develop non-bureaucratic structures, build active and enthusiastic teams and foster strong relationships with their employees and customers. While leadership is a key principle, developing a quality culture is a collaborative exercise. Ishkawa (1985) argues that quality initiatives can succeed only if they are the responsibility of all employees at every level. He advocates quality circles where employees meet and discuss ways of improving quality.

2.4.2 Resistance to TQM

Despite the interest in quality and organisational improvement there is still residual reluctance among some of those who are involved in education to embrace what they view as the methodologies and terminologies of the business world. Some educationalists dislike drawing analogies between educational processes and the manufacture of industrial products. The ideas of having set criteria and of meeting standards is heavily emphasised in the TQM methodology. While the maintaining of standards is difficult to argue against, in practice it has led to a number of unintended practices in second level education in Ireland such as teaching-to-the-test, the points race and the emergence of the grind school culture. The emphasis on competition promoted by TQM is also alien to the education sector. This has led to the emergence of league tables and to market driven accountability. While not all of the features of TQM are relevant to education, the importance of the principle of striving to continually improve an organisation's work processes may be considered worthwhile. Bond and Woodall (1993) argue that although education is different to business, education must face the basic concerns faced by those in the business world. On a cautionary note however, O'Brien (2011) argues that competition should not be the driving force for improvement in education. Despite such reservations, there is little doubt that TQM has been instrumental in promoting the idea that schools should continually strive to improve their practices and their performances.

The following section peruses the literature to identify and assess different approaches that are taken by schools with a view to improving their performance, and how such improvements can best be ensured. These approaches will be explored through the lens of the three interconnected questions posed in the introduction:

1. What is the purpose of school evaluation - development or accountability?
2. Who should carry out the evaluation - external agents or internal stakeholders?
3. What form should the evaluation take - inspection or self-evaluation?

2.5 What is the purpose of evaluation - development or accountability?

Broadly speaking, the two main purposes of evaluation that are identified in the literature the accountability perspective and the development perspective.

2.5.1 Evaluation for accountability

At its most basic level, accountability can be understood as ‘a willingness to accept responsibility or to account for one’s actions’ (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2013). Accountability has different connotations in different studies and it is clear that approaches to studying accountability are closely related to how the concept is defined. For instance, the relationship between accountability and standards and measurements is the focus of researchers such as Scriven (1991), Sirotnik (2002), and Gunzenhauser (2006). A different emphasis is provided by researchers such as McNiff (2002b), who sees accountability as an internal process of reflection and self-review rather than something that is done to an individual.

Some researchers view accountability as an exercise in checking service delivery to ensure it meets expectations. Davis and White (2001) see accountability as checking that those who are responsible for education are doing a good job by indicating any short falls. They maintain that accountability involves democratic checks that children are receiving basic education, learning what is necessary for them to become good citizens, and determining that those providing the education are answerable for this. Portraying accountability as a series of ‘checks’ automatically envisages it as an external process; one that is done ‘to’ the individual. In contrast, McNiff (2002b) views the teacher as a reflective practitioner and highlights concepts such as self-reflection, self-evaluation and peer review. She asserts that teachers and Principals should review their own practices and ‘produce an account to show how they felt they were justified in claiming that they have improved the quality of education experience for themselves and for the children in their schools (p.3).

This approach poses the obvious question: Can teachers, or indeed anyone, be objective enough to evaluate their own work? An EU pilot project carried out on school self-evaluation suggests that ‘teachers are prepared to be self-critical and to ask themselves questions they might resent from others’ (McNamara and O’Hara 2008, p.70). However, there are no consequences for getting a ‘bad’ review in such a self-

assessment. Vanhoof & Petegem (2007) query if schools and teachers would be as prepared to give themselves a negative assessment should the consequences be detrimental to themselves or to the school. Whatever the outcome of this debate, it is clear that the trend is towards greater transparency and accountability in education.

2.5.2 Types of accountability

Numerous interpretations of accountability are identified in an engagement with the literature. Understanding them and attempting to decipher which are pertinent to education is an onerous task. Bringing clarity to the argument by categorising current accountability policies into four basic approaches offers a worthwhile starting point. These may be classified as the market competition approach, the management approach, the professional approach and the decentralisation of decision-making approach. Two trends in education are also explored.

2.5.3 A shift to a market driven education system

The move towards greater accountability has seen a relatively recent shift from a bureaucratic to a market-driven accountability systems. Two types of accountability have been linked to this trend, marketisation and managerialism (Leithwood, 2001).

2.5.4 Marketisation

There is little doubt that market accountability has had a major influence on educational provision in recent years. Harris & Herrington, (2006) assert that the pressure to improve is based on a rational consumer viewpoint. Competition among schools they argue is perceived as the primary means to quality improvement (Chubb & Moe, 1990). Within this approach, a strong element of parental school choice empowers parents to influence the quality of their children's schools, especially when supported by published performance data providing evidence of the academic achievements of their chosen schools (Reynolds, Muijs, and Treharne 2003, p.84). The assumed position appears to be that greater consumer control will ensure schools are meeting the centrally-defined standards in order to justify their receipt of public funds. Furthermore, parents will be assisted by reliable hard information in their decision-making, in terms of choice of schools for their children.

A key assumption of market accountability is that measuring performance and providing the appropriate rewards or sanctions will motivate schools and the individuals who work in them to perform at higher levels. Proponents of this approach in the public sector hail the fact that public policy is no longer driven by ideology but rather by hard empirical ‘evidence about what works’ (O’Brien 2006, p.12). Others refute such notions however, and claim that the reliance on empirical evidence, in order to drive school policy, is non-ideological. McNamara and O’Hara (2008) maintain that it involves ‘an ideology of faith in positivist and technical rationalist approaches to social science research’ (p.5). They question the underlying assumption that the information on which consumer decisions are made is valid and reliable, and they also question whether the consumers, namely the parents, have the economic independence and resources to make real choices.

Hofman et al. suggest that the ‘evidence of actual benefits of market orientated reforms is at best mixed’ (2009, p.52). Rosenthal goes as far as asserting that such evaluation regimes can actually do more harm than good (2004). Some research suggest that this form of accountability may in some cases actually demotivate teachers, labels schools as failing and may therefore engender and contribute to many of the current undesirable practices in education such as cheating and the manipulation of students’ results (Jacob 2005; Koretz 2005; Jacob and Levitt 2003). Marketisation is closely linked to managerialism which draws on management strategies from the business world to improve schools.

2.5.5 Management accountability

The management approach to accountability is a systematic effort to create more goal-orientated, efficient and effective schools through rational procedures. Managerialism involves the use of more scientific methods such as quality standards, benchmarking and evidence-based practices to inform educational decision-making and to improve school performances. The underlying assumption is that strategic school improvement and school development planning will in themselves, improve schools. In the management approach, Principals are expected to assume the role of strategic managers by interpreting systematically collected data and by developing improvement goals with staff. Adopting a more scientific and systematic approach to education has much support among school administrators, if not among educators. Slavin (2002) asserts that

‘rigorous systematic and objective procedures, using experimental or quasi-experimental designs’ will produce valid knowledge and will transform education (p.16). McNamara and O’Hara (2010) contest this assertion pointing out that there is little evidence in the research to support this view. On the contrary, they argue that the tendency towards more detailed definitions of course content, an increase in required learning outcomes, fool-proof teaching methods, and standardised assessment models impinge on the professional autonomy of teachers. This in turn may lead to the deskilling of the teacher and to negative effects on their classroom performance. In an effort to address the limitations of marketisation and managerialism, many countries are moving to devolve greater responsibilities to schools.

2.5.6 Devolution of responsibility to school level

Most developed countries have witnessed a general devolution of autonomy and responsibility in the running of schools and a move away from centralisation and towards local management. Factors such as resource management, curriculum development, school evaluation and pupil achievement, have been transferred from centralised school authorities to individual schools and teachers. As well as teaching and learning, schools now take responsibility for management areas such as annual budgets and planning for accommodation. Proponents of this trend maintain that empowering schools to take ownership of their own development and improvement acts to their advantage and that schools should be capable of managing their own affairs locally (DES 2012). Others are less certain about the motivation behind the move to decentralise education. McNamara and O’Hara (2008) state that as the financial implications of instigating a comprehensive evaluation system that both improves schools and satisfies the accountability demands of society becomes obvious, cash strapped countries are experimenting with new approaches to empowering teachers and schools to develop self-evaluation capacity.

The literature highlights clearly that disagreements exist as to the impact of this shift in responsibility. While devolution might be expected to increase the autonomy and empowerment levels of teachers, what has happened in some instances is that schools and teachers are subjected to more sophisticated surveillance procedures such as increased student testing, benchmarking and teacher inspection and evaluation (McNamara and O’Hara, 2008). Moos (2003) states that this trend is an attempt to move

decision making to school level, while simultaneously increasing pressure on schools to deliver a value for money agenda and to justify pupil achievement rates.

This may reasonably be considered as a rather jaundiced view of inspection or one can equally view it as a means of helping schools to improve their practices and provide feedback and recognition to these schools. Appropriate evaluation systems can benefit both schools and administrators. They can encourage governments to allow greater autonomy because they are assured that schools are providing a quality education and making good use of public investment; while schools and teachers may be more willing to accept greater autonomy as they can feel secure that they are doing the right thing. The OECD envisages evaluation as a key approach to enhancing the responsiveness of schools to the needs of their intake while at the same time allowing them to improve (Meuret and Morlaix, 2003). Setting goals and targets allows schools incremental improvements that can be planned and monitored. However, researchers such as Schwartz and Strubkamp (2004) are critical that the current form of new public management evaluation, claiming that it actually helps to maintain bureaucratic control rather than to increase the autonomy of teachers and schools as suggested.

Two types of accountability have been shown to impact positively on the autonomy of teachers; the decentralisation of decision making to schools and professional accountability.

2.5.7 Decentralisation of decision making

The decentralisation of educational decision making is one strategy for improving education provision and for making it more relevant. This involves the devolution of authority from the central government to the school level. Advocates of this approach maintain that decentralising decision making ensures that schools reflect local priorities and values. This position holds that in giving a voice and decision-making powers to local stake-holders, they can improve educational outcomes and increase client satisfactions (Barrera-Osoria et al., 2009).

Decentralisation of decision-making in education can be seen as a continuum in the degree to which decision making is devolved to the school. On one end of the continuum, schools are granted limited autonomy, usually over issues concerning instructional methods or planning. On the other, schools are operated under school

councils, receive funding directly from the central government and are granted the responsibility for hiring and firing teachers and Principals (Barrera-Osoria et al., 2009). Decentralisation and greater school autonomy is associated with narrowing the disparities in school performance among schools. For instance, Finland and Sweden are amongst those countries with the highest degree of school autonomy on many PISA measures, and Iceland has the smallest performance differences among schools and could arguably be said to produce a high quality of educational provision (OECD, 2004).

One method of decentralising decision-making powers in education is described as school-based management (SBM). SBM projects aim to empower Principals and teachers and to strengthen their professional motivation, thereby enhancing their sense of ownership of the school (Caldwell, 2005). They also seek to involve parents and the local community in a meaningful way by helping them make decisions about their local school and in the process, increasing the speed and relevance of school-level decision making (Barrera-Osoria et al., 2009).

One of the key benefits of giving more autonomy to schools is that it should lead to more effective use of resources because those making the decisions for each school are intimately acquainted with local needs. In practice however, decentralization does not necessarily give more power to the general public because the power devolved by the reform is susceptible to capture by elites. Barrera-Osoria et al. (2009) maintain that local democracy and political accountability are often weak in some countries and elite groups can take control of school management and administration. A poor culture of accountability within communities may lead to situations where no one is willing to question the actions of school leaders. Similarly, decentralisation may be a problem in situations where the teacher is regarded as the ultimate authority by virtue of being the only highly educated person in a community.

In terms of the benefit of SBM to academic performance, there are mixed findings in the literature. Studies in Kenya, El Salvador, Mexico, and Nicaragua found that SBM had significant positive effects on student test scores. However, other factors such as reduced class sizes, more teacher incentives and greater parental oversight were also said to have an influence (Duflo, Dupas and Kremer, 2007). Studies Brazil and Honduras however, reported that SBM had no impact on student test scores (Carnoy et al., 2008).

2.5.8 Professional accountability

Theories of professional accountability makes the distinction between those described as experts and those without expertise or those who are described as the ‘lay person’. Professional approaches hold educators accountable and increase the power of teachers in decision making. The rationale behind this approach is that education is a complex endeavour and as such, it is difficult to specify all or even most of the desired outcomes. Consequently, the teacher should be allowed a wide range of discretion to deal with this complexity. It is based on the assumption that teachers have the most up-to-date and relevant information and that they are well-placed to make good professional decisions. This perspective is predicated on a sense of trust that the professional will carry out his or her duties, largely due to a sense of internal obligation and the desire to do the right thing for their students (Anderson, 2005).

Those entrusted with overseeing educational provision look for ways of ensuring accountability that respect the professionalism of teachers. Pearson and Moomaw suggest that ‘like other professionals, teachers must have the freedom to prescribe the best treatment for their students, as doctors and lawyers do for their patients and clients’ (2005, p45). School self-evaluation and peer review are included among the initiatives that respect this professionalism. In peer review, individual teachers offer evidence of practice that is reviewed by colleagues in order to help them improve their practice (Anderson, 2005). Another form of this devolution of responsibility is the decentralisation of decision-making approaches to accountability.

2.6 Evaluation for development

Many approaches are highlighted in the literature that discusses how schools might be improved and two main theories on improving education provision emerge. These are identified broadly as school improvement theory and school effectiveness theory, although efforts have recently been made to merge these two theories to form a separate model called Effective School Improvement. A central tenet of these approaches is that schools’ have the capacity within themselves to carry out the necessary changes and to bring about sustainable improvements by continually learning and developing. These issues are examined below.

2.6.1 School improvement

School improvement is a specific branch of the study of educational change. It has been defined as ‘a distinct approach to educational change that enhances student outcomes as well as strengthening the school’s capacity for managing change’ (Hopkins 2005, p.2-3). School improvement theory is based on the assumption that internal conditions in the school are a key element in accomplishing educational goals. Underpinning the process is the notion that if the internal conditions in the school are improved, the chances of students achieving their potential will also be improved. School improvement is concerned with supporting the quality of education and developing a school’s capacity to change for the purpose of enhancing pupil learning (Sun et al., 2007). With the growing recognition that schools can impact both positively and negatively on student outcomes, school improvement research has proved to be increasingly influential and powerful (Harris, 2014).

2.6.2 Factors necessary for school improvement

Research has identified an extensive range of factors and related strategies for school improvement. Researchers are unanimous that improvement processes must focus on teaching and learning. Hopkins argues that ‘creating powerful and effective learning experiences for students is the heartland for school improvement’ (2001, p.xi). He maintains that ‘authentic’ school improvement needs to drive down to the learning level, so that they impact directly on learning. Factors identified, include focusing on outcomes related to student learning, teaching methods, learning styles and curriculum change. Sammons disagrees with focusing exclusively on pedagogical factors (2006). She asserts that in order to bring about real improvement, schools need to focus on organisational and pedagogical change simultaneously. Improving pedagogical matters without putting in place the appropriate organisational structures and support has a limited effect she claims, while developing an efficient organisation that is not focused on the core activities of teaching and learning is a futile exercise. Organisational factors include elements such as leadership, participative management and teamwork. Whatever changes and initiative are carried out in the school, it is consistently stated that they need to be evaluated, monitored and reviewed. Furthermore, researchers cite

the need to provide empirical evidence to support improvement initiatives and to measure their impact (Sammons 2006; Hopkins 2001; Merrett 2000).

2.6.3 Impact of school improvement

Assessing the impact of school improvement projects is a difficult exercise. There are few detailed studies of school improvement projects in action and very few comparative studies have been carried out. Coe maintains that many improvement programmes are not evaluated or are poorly evaluated (2009). However, a number of studies have shown positive findings. Sammons outlines two projects that have been shown to have a positive effect on teaching and learning outcome (2006): The *Improving Quality for All Project* in the United Kingdom (Hopkins 1996) and the *Manitoba School Improvement Project* in Canada (Earl and Lee, 1998). Other reforms, such as the *National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies* in England have also demonstrated successful outcomes. However, in spite of the significant investment in such projects Fullan argues that they have not demonstrated a good return (2002). Following the implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act* in the United States, the Comprehensive School Reform Quality Centre (CSRQ) carried out a review of the effectiveness and quality of 18 school improvement models. Five models are rated as having a moderately positive effect on student achievement, five rate as limited and eight rate as having no effect on results. The lack of evidence on the impact of school improvement initiatives leads researchers to look to more scientific methods for improving schools. Closely linked to school improvement is the school effectiveness movement whose major aim is to link educational theory and the empirical research that relates to educational effectiveness and improvement.

2.6.4 School effectiveness

School effectiveness theory came to prominence as a backlash to studies such as Coleman (1966) which found that non-school factors, particularly areas such as family background, that are responsible for the difference in academic achievement. A plethora of school effectiveness research has since found that schools can make a difference to educational outcomes (Teddlie and Reynolds, 2000; Cotton, 1995; Sammons, Hillman and Mortimore, 1995; Scheerens, 1992; Levine and Lezotte, 1990; Mortimore et al.,

1988; Purkey and Smyth, 1983; Brookover et al., 1979). The principle underpinning of the school effectiveness movement is that schools differ in performance even when they are similar in terms of pupils' innate abilities and socio-economic background (Scheerens, 2000). Numerous studies back up the claim that individual schools make a distinct impact, notwithstanding social class (Bosker and Witziers, 1996; Teddlie and Stringfield, 1993; Scheerens, 1992; Levine and Lezotte, 1990).

School effectiveness theorists believe that by identifying what is effective, it should be possible to change and improve educational provision. Reynolds et al. ask the important questions of 'what makes a "good" school and how do we make more schools "good" (2014, p.197)? Sammons et al. contends that an effective school adds value to student outcomes when compared with schools with similar intake (1997). School effectiveness research has attempted to identify the elements of effective education that could be introduced and that can add value to learners. It aims to enhance understanding of school and classroom processes and how such processes impact on variables such as students' educational outcomes, attendance rates, attitudes, behaviour and self-esteem (Coleman, 2004; Gray, 1995).

Key elements of effective teaching and learning in classrooms include the positive relationship between learner outcomes and teacher attributes. Issues such as teacher commitment, high teacher expectations, teacher collaboration, care and respect shown towards pupils by teachers are also taken into account (McCoy & Smyth, 2013; Chapman, 1991). Reynolds and Teddlie maintain that schools can account for 12%-15% of the variance in student achievement (2001). In order to achieve these results, teachers need to use a broad variety of teaching skills and 'to have access to rich teaching repertoires' (European Commission 2012, p.20). Supporters maintain that the positive results of the school effectiveness movement undermine the credibility of those who ascribe to the view that the influence of a school is impotent in the face of its social background.

On the other hand, critics of this approach view it as over-simplistic and suggest that it ignores the complexity of the school environment and the multidimensional nature of school improvement. They view school effectiveness as instrumentalist, rationalistic and managerial (Saunders 1999, p.415). Critics maintain that school effectiveness

research does not take into consideration different contexts and often ignores the impact of social or cultural aspects, such as values (Scheerens, in Creemers, 2002). School effectiveness is also criticised for failing to demonstrate the extent to which differences among schools in their ‘effectiveness’ are really caused by identifiable factors (Coe, 2009). In the context where achievement is measured in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, “good” schools have become defined in technical and narrowly instrumental terms (Ball, 1997) and “good teachers” are characterised by efficiency and performance output with scant recognition afforded to the virtues of morality, imagination, enthusiasm, social commitment or creativity (McDermott 2012, p.62). Biesta argues that effectiveness research gives no insight into the values, purpose and goodness of education, stating that ‘there is much discussion about educational processes and their improvement but very little about what such processes are supposed to bring about’ (2008, p.36). In addition, Coe asserts that the amount of variation in performance that is explained by any of the factors associated with effectiveness is very small (2009).

2.6.5 Effective school improvement

In recent years it is felt that despite differences in their origins and orientations, the two paradigms of school effectiveness and improvement can be combined. With school effectiveness aiming to find out ‘what works’ in education and ‘why’, and school improvement focusing on changing education in the desired direction, the two are seen as congruent. Leung believes that the two are absolutely compatible and suggests that the challenge is to develop a system which addresses the objectives of both perspectives, for their mutual benefit (2005).

Creemers et al. state that effective school improvement refers to planned educational changes that enhance student learning outcomes as well as a school’s capacity for managing change (2006). They believe that to evaluate effective school improvement, an effectiveness criterion is needed as well as an improvement criterion. The effectiveness criterion refers to student outcomes and might focus on learning gains in the cognitive domain. It might also be categorised as any other outcome that the school decides to target for students, such as absenteeism or retention rates (Creemers, 1996). According to Karagiorgi ‘SSE needs to be located within the two paradigms of school effectiveness and school improvement’ in order to be deemed effective (2011, p.200).

While school effectiveness research and theory can provide insights and knowledge that may be used in school improvement, recent researchers have turned their attention to school improvement by examining ways of measuring education outcomes (Reynolds et al., 2014; Biesta, 2008). School improvement is considered a very powerful tool in educational theory-testing and provides new insights and new possibilities for effective school issues, which can then be analysed further in effective school research.

It is worth highlighting that recent research has consistently shown not only that the classroom level can explain more of the variance in pupil outcomes than the school level but also that a large proportion of classroom level variance can be explained by what teachers do in the classroom (Muijs & Reynolds, 2011). Given the clear evidence that teacher effects exceed school effects when progress over time is studied, this school-based concern may well have hindered the improvement effort (Muijs & Reynolds 2010; Teddlie & Reynolds 2000; Scheerens & Bosker 1997).

One significant implication of such findings with regard improving education provision is that it requires an increase in the capacity of schools and teachers in order to bring about change and improvement among students.

2.6.6 Capacity Building

Research suggests that school improvement initiatives should focus on improving the capacity of the school to change. Capacity building is defined as any strategy that increases the collective effectiveness of a group to raise the bar and to close the gap of student learning. Typically, this involves helping to develop individual and collective knowledge and competencies, resources and motivation (Fullan, 2006). It also entails developing an appropriate culture where people feel supported to take initiatives and risks. To create this culture, Chapman & Sammons propose a ‘bottom-up’ approach to increasing the capacity of the school to take charge of its own growth and ‘locating power and control with those actually tasked with securing improvements’ (2013, p.4). Chapman & Sammons assert that in contrast to the school effectiveness paradigm, one’s capacity for school improvement is internally rather than externally driven (2013). This highlights the central role teachers’ classroom practices in attaining school improvement. Researchers agree that school improvement must incorporate developing teachers so that they can improve their practices. Hopkins asserts that it is unlikely that

developments will take place in student learning without developments in teacher practices (2001).

MacBeath (1999) emphasises that the quality of teaching is closely bound up with the capacity of teachers to make professional research-based judgements that relate to their own practice. Reynolds et al. (2014, p.212) state that teachers' beliefs about teaching, their subject knowledge and their self-efficacy are important to school improvement. As such, they encouraged teachers to adopt the more effective teaching methods that have powerful effects in improving students' achievements.

The European Commission suggest that the pace of change in education is so fast that 'every teacher needs to keep his or her practice under continuous review and adjust it in light of students outcomes and latest research' (2012, p.5). Consequently, continuous professional development (CPD) is crucial, and it must be structured in such a way that it helps practitioners improve their teaching (Lo, Lai, and Chen, 2012). Drudy finds that teachers who engage with CPD confirm that it has had a positive impact on their teaching (2013). According to Phillips, CPD should challenge existing conceptual frameworks by promoting a questioning and reflective approach to on-going practice (2008).

To do this, Bolam et al. advocate the development of professional learning communities (PLC). They claim that an effective PLC 'has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning' (2005, p.iii). They suggest that an effective PLC should have shared values and vision, collective responsibility for pupils' learning, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration focused on learning and group, as well as, individual professional learning (cited in Mathews, 2010).

This type of learning activities requires a shift in the nature of staff development from a focus on training to a focus on development and ultimately to a focus on learning. She contends that since educators often need to change what they do on a daily or even on an hourly basis in order to respond to the needs of learners, educators therefore need to focus on their own learning. She maintains that professional learning should replace professional development as educators must know enough in order to change and they

must change in order to get different results (ibid, p.756). Moving towards professional learning according to Mathews, requires changes in thinking about where and how learning takes place. Learning activities she claims, can involve school-based conversations, problem solving, coaching, mentoring, observing and being observed, collecting data, analysing data, making recommendations and planning. In MacBeath's view:

Improvement takes place when learning is centre stage, when there is a learning culture in a school and when heads and senior leadership team are lead learners. It is in the process of building such a learning culture that self-evaluation takes root and external review, or inspection, plays a valuable supportive and challenging role (2008, p.398).

2.6.7 Reconciling accountability and development

Darling-Hammond asserts that issues of standards and accountability cannot be separated from issues of teaching and learning, assessment, school organisation, professional development and funding. She maintains that genuine accountability involves 'supporting changes in teaching and schooling that can heighten the probability that students meet standards' (2004, p.1078). Such a process has to involve more than simply checking and auditing and must include support structures to scaffold improvements within the school. Examples of support include improving teachers' knowledge and skills, providing school structures that support quality teaching and learning and creating processes for school assessment that evaluates students' opportunities to learn and to provide leverage for continuous change and improvement (Mathews, 2010).

It is also very apparent that the two elements of accountability and development are difficult to reconcile. Leung (2005) contends that school self-evaluation for development requires the willingness, commitment and enthusiasm of teachers to devote time and effort to it. Key hallmarks of such a process imply the freedom to decide on the form and distribution of the report, mechanisms to support school improvement after external evaluation, a expression of trust from the government and educational authorities and the dedicated training of teachers as to how school self-evaluation should be conducted. Leung also states that accountability requires external inspectors to honestly identify weaknesses in management as well as in teaching and standards. While evaluation findings may be publicly reported, the use of performance

indicators that focus on measurable items, particularly the inclusion of negative findings, may lead to serious consequences for the school.

It would seem to this researcher that this view of accountability ignores the capacity of an effective accountability system to highlight strengths in the organisation, and can provide validation for the good work in which the school is engaged. As indicated below, researchers such as Nevo believe that external inspectors and internal evaluators can well co-exist successfully and that being accountable for one's performance make it more likely that development will take place (2002; 2001). The relationship between internal and external evaluation will be discussed in greater detail in the following section.

2.7 Who should carry out the evaluation- external or internal agents?

The question of whether evaluation is best carried out internally or by external agents has been a cause of much discourse in the literature. While the role that external evaluation plays in maintaining standards and in ensuring accountability is recognised by most researchers, the way in which such evaluation processes have been carried out is a cause for criticism by many (Nevo, 2001; Norton Grubb, 1999). Likewise, the trend towards decentralisation of education and an increase in autonomy for schools has led many countries to seek more participatory and self-directed forms of evaluation. Questions remain however as to the objectivity and rigour of internal evaluation processes (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2012). As consumers and institutions such as the EU demand greater accountability, governments are slow to relinquish control of schools as they seek to maintain standards and ensure accountability (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). This issue has led the governments, the educational inspectorates and school authorities in most developed countries to look for ways in which internal and external evaluations can co-exist. The following section explores the relationship between external and internal evaluation and the efforts that countries have made in order to harmonise the two often-conflicting approaches.

Before discussing such an issue, it is worth providing an understanding of what is meant by external and internal evaluation. Scriven (1991) defines external evaluation as an evaluation carried out by someone who is not on the project team. In the context of a

school, an external evaluation may be carried out by the school district, the state Department of Education or independent professional evaluators on behalf of the Ministry of Education. The process might also be carried out by independent evaluators commissioned by the school itself or by the Board of Management or by anyone other than the organisation or the persons being evaluated. Alternatively, internal evaluation is defined as evaluation done by the school staff themselves or someone inside the organisation, even if they are not directly linked to the project in question (Scriven, 1991). This might be a teacher or a group of teachers, the Principal or other administrative staff who are designated by the school to carry out such an evaluation.

2.7.1 External evaluation

Until recently, schools in developed countries have been evaluated almost exclusively using external agents. In most countries, including Ireland, these evaluations have been carried out by external inspection agencies and the academic literature provides a wealth of information about the purposes of external evaluation. Richards (2004) identifies a number of such purposes as complying with relevant statutory requirements, reporting on particular initiatives or on the effects of policies in practice, offering explanation of particular outcomes in schools, offering judgements about how schools are meeting their own aims and values and assessing how well lessons are conducted (cited in Mathews, 2010).

Despite the recent move towards devolution of responsibility to school level, most countries have maintained some form of external evaluation (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). There are a number of salient reasons for this. Governments have a duty to ensure that students are getting what is perceived socially to be a good standard of education and that schools are providing value for the money that is invested in education. By setting down quality standards and evaluation criteria, it is possible to assess whether schools are meeting the grade. External evaluation also allows education departments to benchmark schools against each other, thereby increasing the transparency of the education system. External evaluation are used furthermore to play an important role in the development of schools. Van Bruggen suggests that the process can provide schools with a baseline from which they can look to future improvement (2005). External evaluation aims to improve schools by providing an audit and a list of

action points towards which schools can work. It also highlights crucial preconditions for improvement such as leadership, appropriate structures and resources.

However, some researchers and educators are critical that external evaluation is increasingly being used to define and control every aspect of teaching and learning. McNamara and O'Hara argue that 'the obsession with uniformity, conformity and accountability and standards has seriously damaged the autonomy and morale of professionals and organisations' (2008, p16). Hargreaves believes that many teachers feel demeaned and degraded by such practices and by the seemingly constant need to justify their existence (cited in McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). Power insists that any evaluation system has to value, recognise, support and develop quality teaching and this emerges from the research generally as being the most influential factor in raising student outcomes (1997). The more negative impacts of external evaluation referred to by researchers such as Leithwood et al. (2000) and Dobert (2004), and the trend towards the decentralisation of education, has led educators and administrators to look to more democratic forms of evaluation such as internal evaluation.

2.7.2 Internal evaluation

Internal evaluation has recently become a cornerstone in the evaluation of education. Initiatives such as self-evaluation, peer review, peer observation, action research, reflective practices, practitioner-led research and whole school development planning have become increasingly influential as a means of enhancing teacher professionalism and improving schools. Internal evaluation requires that schools monitor themselves in a systematic way. It requires reflection about the school's aims, the establishing of criteria for success and the determining of the appropriate methods for judging actions within the school. Leithwood et al. (2001) assert that internal monitoring systems and frameworks in schools play a vital role in informing the strategic direction of the school. They provide teachers with opportunities to take control of aspects of their own development and provide a greater understanding and confidence as regards the direction of the school.

A number of reasons are offered as to the advantages of involving people in decision-making about their own professional work contexts. Elliot proposes that human life in general, and schools in particular, are characterised by a high degree of unpredictability

and as such, trusting teachers in their capacity to exercise wisdom and judgement is a wise policy (2004, p.170). Most researchers agree that those who are most closely involved with a particular area of work and who are familiar with the context and nuances of the environment are best placed to evaluate their own practices and to make suggestions as to how they can be improved (Flynn, 1992). Flynn further argues that greater inclusion allows participants to better understand the rationale for change and as a result they are more likely to implement the necessary changes.

One of the major criticisms of internal evaluation is the issue of objectivity and the capacity and willingness of teachers to evaluate their own work and effectiveness. Vanhoof and Van Petegem suggest that, where internal evaluation feeds into external evaluation, schools may fear negative repercussions and may engage in 'putting on a show, window-dressing and spin' (2007, p.21). They question whether school self-evaluation has the rigour and validity of external evaluation and it could reasonably be argued that debates such as this led most OECD countries to develop an eclectic combination of both external and internal evaluation.

2.7.3 Argument for both

Unsurprisingly, a general consensus is forming among researchers therefore that some combination of external and internal evaluation is required to satisfy the accountability and improvement components of evaluation. A number of reasons are put forward that might explain this meeting of minds. Firstly, as governments begin to realize the financial implications of satisfying the accountability requirements, they seek a cost-effective and appropriate ways to evaluate the complex environments of schools (Giddins, 2004). It would be prohibitively expensive to inspect every school on a yearly basis. Secondly, the move to decentralisation and to greater school autonomy makes the monitoring of schools more difficult. Sun et al. (2007) suggest, in the interest of pragmatism, that an appropriate balance between centralisation and decentralisation is essential. Thirdly, from an ethical point of view, while individuals have a right to self-determination and to have their say in key matters that effect their work, governments, as previously indicated, operate with an acute awareness of ensuring responsibility, accountability and transparency. Winter asserts that 'a democratic society should grant the individual school maximum pedagogical autonomy, but not relinquish responsibility for the best possible school provision for its younger generation' (2000, p.82).

There is growing agreement among researchers that both systems of evaluation can co-exist and that each can benefit from the other. Nevo for example, proposes that internal evaluation can broaden the scope of external evaluation and give it greater depth. (2001). Participants in the school are usually more familiar with the specific nature of the local school context and can focus on data that reveal the unique character of the particular school. Internal evaluation can also play a role in interpreting the findings of external evaluation. As external evaluation usually operates from a criterion-orientated frame of reference, the local perspective can sometimes be lost. Internal evaluation can shine a light on the character and unique qualities of the individual school. It can also assist with the implementation of recommendations that derive from the external evaluation report. Nevo suggests that schools with experience in self-evaluation have a greater chance of adopting a constructive attitude in relation to school audits and can make more productive use of the results of an external evaluation (2002). The research project described in this thesis offers an excellent opportunity to investigate such assertions first hand, as empirical evidence of both internal and external evaluation is included.

The literature suggests that, in parallel, external evaluation can play a variety of constructive roles in the internal evaluation of schools and they can broaden the scope of internal evaluation in a number of ways. Schools are increasingly expected to formulate their own policies and plans and the value of such documents can often be limited by the experiences of those within the immediate environment. McBeath & Myers maintain that a school can suffer from 'organizational blindness' and have difficulty looking beyond its own perspective (2002). External evaluation can give valuable feedback to schools by benchmarking them against similar schools, and by sharing ideas and innovations that have worked elsewhere. External evaluation can be a stimulus for schools to engage in self-evaluation therefore. Some schools will engage in internal evaluation to help them deal with an upcoming external evaluation, and most schools will, if given the choice, engage in internal evaluation as an alternative to the stresses of external evaluation. Nevo, suggests that 'sometimes it's difficult to avoid the notion that the most important function of external evaluation is to motivate people and organizations to do internal evaluation' (2001, p.98). This researcher asserts, given the evidence to follow, that such a perspective offers a very narrow view of external

evaluation and that it disregards the capacity of external evaluation to bring about change and development in its own right.

External evaluation has been credited with legitimising the role of internal evaluation. A criticism of internal evaluation is that it is open to bias and subjectivity but external evaluation may help validate internal evaluation by providing a 'stamp of approval' on its processes and findings. By respecting its existence as an important ingredient of school evaluation it adds a sense of external credibility and reliability as such. Neil and Johnson (2002) point out that while external evaluation involves monitoring and assessing what needs to improve in a school, the power of internal evaluation lies in its potential to help identify 'how' to improve. Flynn concurs and claims that inclusive evaluation processes can provide participants with valuable insights into what changes are needed, and more importantly perhaps, why changes are needed (1992).

Some researchers challenge the compatibility of external and internal evaluation. Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2007) point out that ultimately, external evaluation is not about giving feedback. Instead, it aims to determine results to assess the standard of education provision. As external evaluation primarily involves schools being judged by the inspectors, the danger exists that justification and validation will predominate at the expense of improvement. Van Petegem refers to a 'strategic' use of results from internal reviews and suggests that the primary aim for schools in a summative evaluation is that it presents itself in as positive a light as possible, therefore inhibiting any readiness to reflect critically on its own functioning (1999, p.30). It could be argued however, that a readiness to reflect critically on their own functioning does not stop a school from presenting itself in a positive light.

Some researchers argue that Van Petegem's viewpoint reflects the perception of evaluation as an exercise in compliance. McNamara and O'Hara (2008) suggest that this 'instrumental' approach to evaluation has long been superseded by more sophisticated models. For instance, recent work on education evaluation has attempted to move the focus of evaluation from external 'judgement' about what works towards an understanding of the impact of curricula on recipients (Kashner, 2000). MacBeath argues that the quality of teaching is closely bound up with the capacity of teachers to make judgements on their own practices and the programmes and methodologies that they are required to implement (1999).

Many recent researchers express a preference for internal evaluation supported by light-touch external evaluation. Simons suggests that genuine practitioner-led evaluation with some external support can be effective, concluding that ‘when motivation is intrinsic, schools respond’ (2002, p.33). Fitzgibbon-Taylor (1996) supports light touch external regulation in cases where schools have established effective self-evaluation systems. However, in this researcher’s experience, schools in Ireland have yet to establish effective self-evaluation systems and therefore external evaluation still involves inspectors making judgements about what is working well or what is not working in a school.

While there is consensus that both internal and external evaluation systems are necessary, there is less agreement on the form that this should take. The following section addresses the third key research question: What type of evaluation is more effective - external evaluation in the form of inspection or internal in the form of school self-evaluation?

2.8 What form should the evaluation take - inspection or self-evaluation?

In most OECD countries today, administrators in education review how evaluation is carried out in schools (Feubert, 2009). There is a discernible shift away from intensive external evaluation systems towards more decentralised evaluation systems, such as school self-evaluation. This section examines the two main forms of evaluation/inspection and SSE, to ascertain best practice in school evaluation.

2.8.1 School Inspection

The emergence of school inspection arose from the adoption of a more professional and scientific approach to evaluation and the need to establish realistic and defensible criteria for making judgments about the quality of the functioning of schools (DES, 1999). Janssens and van Amelsvoort define school inspection as:

The process of periodic, targeted scrutiny carried out to provide independent verification and to report on whether the quality of schools is meeting national and local performance standards, legislative and professional requirements and the needs of students and parents (2008, p.15).

Inspection is based on the assumption that procedures are objective and that judgements are being made by neutral observers such as Inspectors. The introduction of school inspections is usually justified by arguing that, as schools are now increasingly responsible for the quality of their work, they should undergo regular external inspections (Vanhoof & Van Petegem, 2007).

Inspection is generally associated with the use of quantitative methods, where hard empirical data is gathered to evaluate factors such as the academic performance of pupils, their rate of absenteeism or the drop-out rate. In recent times, inspection has also drawn on more qualitative practices which reflect the interpretative and naturalistic traditions of evaluation (Feubert, 2009). Qualitative methods are deployed to evaluate pupils' cognitive, social, and relationship skills through observation. For instance, qualitative methods are used in England and Wales to examine the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. The quality assessments of the inspectors are founded on data that gathered through various methods such as lesson observation, questionnaires and interviews. School inspections usually deliver a final report to the school and to the school authority (Gaertner & Pant, 2011; Dederling & Mueller, 2010).

In terms of accountability, inspection helps schools identify quality standards and ensure compliance with these standards. Fidler (1997) maintains that to be effective, schools should do the right thing and therefore this demands an appropriate means of establishing and reviewing what the right thing is. Those who champion inspection argue that they provide valuable information on which policy can be based. Banks for instance, asserts that indicators are needed in such areas as equality, to compare participation and retention levels for special needs groups or to identify those at risk (2005). This again affirms the point that governments need to measure expenditure to assess where finances are needed most urgently, thereby ensuring value for money.

There is an understandable expectation from Principals and from teachers that they would learn something new about their schools through such an undertaking but according to Landwehr, this rarely occurs as inspection teams tend to identify problems that are already more or less known to the school (2011). However, by publishing such problems in an inspection report, the inspectorate alters them into something that can be addressed officially both within the school and from the outside. The identification of areas for improvement offers schools concrete starting points for school improvement

initiatives and may provide an impetus towards action (Landwehr, 2011). This is based on the assumption that the inspection procedure itself is accepted by the school. Acceptance is more likely where the criteria are reasonable, the inspection has a high overall credibility and where the inspection report is readable, plausible, and transparent (Landwehr, 2011; Ehren and Visscher, 2006).

2.8.2 Inspection in OECD countries

Across OECD countries, a wide range of approaches is employed to assess and evaluate schools. The difference in approaches is influenced by variations in the historical, social, political and cultural development of schooling in these countries. All of these approaches are founded on the belief that quality education requires comprehensive school evaluation systems and that evaluation is central to school improvement efforts and systems of school accountability.

Eurydice (2007) identifies three main systems of evaluation, as used in European countries. The first system is where some form of central authority or inspectorate is entrusted with evaluating schools. In countries such as the England, the inspectorate devises criteria and quality standards for the provision of education and schools are judged against these standards. A second system is identified, whereby schools are accountable to local authorities. In Denmark, Belgium, Hungary and the Netherlands for example, local authorities play a role in evaluation, although the trend is increasingly towards developing national standards and attainment testing (Mathews, 2010). A third category relates to countries such as Italy and France where school evaluation has not played a major part in the education system. Mathews (2010) maintains that these countries are gradually moving towards standardised evaluation systems and are developing benchmarks and encouraging self-evaluation. It is clear the trend is towards increased evaluation though the nature of the evaluation has yet to be definitively agreed on.

A perusal of the literature reveals many differences in how inspections are carried out. Feubert (2009) gives a comprehensive summary of the various systems adopted in countries in the OECD. The summary highlights how inspection can vary, not only among countries but also within countries. Some countries focus inspections on the

outcomes of schools while others concentrate on the processes within the schools. Most evaluate both to some degree. Some countries have adopted an approach to evaluation that concentrates predominantly on pupil outcomes. In Hungary and the United States for example, evaluation is focused on pupil attainment in national testing. In the United States, the *No Child Left Behind Act* adopted measures designed to encourage schools to meet specific standards (US Department of Education, 2002). Hungary also adopts an approach to evaluation that concerns itself solely with the results that pupils obtain in national testing. While pupils' performances in national testing in Scotland is combined with results in school-based testing also, pupils performances in school testing only in the Netherlands, in Slovakia and in the Flemish Community of Belgium are used to assess the performance of the school.

More commonly, inspection is concerned with both processes and outcomes. In Poland and France for example, inspections examine schools' compliance with national legislation in curricular areas, as well examining student performances. In England and in Iceland, apart from curriculum evaluation, assessment processes concentrate on other areas such as the composition of teaching staff and how school building management complies with national legislation. Output measures also include the results of pupils in tests and examinations (Eurydice, 2004).

Regional variations are noted within individual countries with regard to some evaluation processes. In Germany, in the Land of Brandenburg, the Schulaufsicht solely evaluates teaching processes, while in Bremen evaluation criteria can include the attainment of pupils (Eurydice, 2004). In Spain, evaluation tends to monitor the observance of regulations, but three autonomous communities (Navarra, the Basque Country and Rioja) also take pupils' attainment into account. In Finland and Hungary, where there are no national regulations for the evaluation of individual schools, education providers are responsible for evaluating education and for deciding on a variety of approaches to local evaluation. In Sweden, the municipalities are free to determine the content of the inspection although the Swedish Agency for Education recommends that these appraisals deal not just with processes but also with school performance and pupil achievement.

Schools are increasingly held accountable to multiple authorities such as education ministries, local councils and the wider community of stakeholders. The evaluation system in England typifies the tendency towards multi-accountability. Schools are

accountable to the central level through Ofsted inspections, to their local authority and to a governing body that includes representatives of key stakeholders such as parents, staff and representatives of the local community. There is also a market-driven accountability system, in which parents are provided with information on school performance to inform their choice of a school (Feubert, 2009). In England, Ofsted developed the Inspection Framework setting out the requirements for evaluating schools and pupils' attainment and this framework also includes a list of criteria upon which all school inspections are based. Eurydice (2007) suggests that this trend towards standardisation seems to equate to reinforcement of school accountability and to increased professionalisation of the evaluation service.

2.8.3 Consequences of inspection

The consequences of external school inspections vary widely across countries. Some countries have high stakes evaluation systems that involve serious consequences for underperforming schools while other regimes are less severe. In the Flemish Community of Belgium and in the Czech Republic, a school may lose its recognition or its financing, or it may be given the label of a 'failing school'. The consequences may also involve the possibility of school shut-down or financial sanctions. Alternatively, rewards for schools or for individual members of the school staff may be forthcoming. In the Czech Republic for instance, if the school is deemed deficient, the Chief School Inspector may submit a proposal for the exclusion of the school from the state school sector. In this eventuality, the school receives no further public funding and is no longer authorised to award official certificates. Similarly in the Netherlands, if the Inspectorate identifies serious shortcomings, it submits an inspection report and accompanying recommendations for implementation in the school by the Minister.

In the United States, schools are subject to sanctions if any one subgroup of its students fails to meet the state-determined targets for adequate yearly progress targets (AYP). If schools fail to make AYP for two consecutive years, their district identifies them for improvement and allows their students the opportunity to transfer to other schools (US Department of Education, 2002). As well as NCLB-mandated penalties, two thirds of state education systems have their own additional policies that penalise persistently low-performing schools (Chiang, 2009). In some countries such as the Czech Republic, the

inspection affects the remuneration of teachers and the receipt of bonuses (OECD, 2008a).

The allocation of public funds to schools on the basis of academic results is not a widespread practice. School evaluation and student performance measures are mainly used to provide performance feedback to schools and to educational authorities. As a general rule, they have little influence on school financing or on other financial elements such as changes to the school budget, the remunerations received by teachers or the provision of financial rewards or sanctions for the school. Only a few countries such as Korea and the United States report using accountability information as a basis to impose financial sanctions on schools (OECD, 2008a).

2.9 Impact of inspection

The impact of inspection can broadly be categorised into two categories: The impact on the performance of the students in the schools and the impact on the motivation of teachers.

2.9.1 Impact on performance

While much of the literature is critical of high stakes external evaluation, there is some evidence to suggest that inspection can raise student test scores. For example, the Dutch Central Planning Agency's study on the impact of school inspections concluded that school inspections led to better performances by schools. In the first two years following an inspection, test scores increased by 2% - 3%. The improvement in Dutch elementary schools was strongest in the area of arithmetic and it persisted over the four years following the inspection. The analyses also indicated that the more intensive the inspections, the larger the improvements in school performance (Luginbuhl et al., 2007). Many researchers find that inspections make a significant contribution to the improvement of the education sector (Janssens, 2005, 2007; Matthews & Sammons, 2004; Ofsted, 2004; Van Bruggen, 2006). Inspection reports provide feedback to schools about their strengths and their weaknesses and they may highlight possible approaches to triggering or developing internal evaluation processes in a school. If these mirror the SSE findings from within the school, the validity of the findings is arguably increased.

A number of studies in Florida have found that the threat of sanction arising from a poor inspection report have raised the observed test scores of students during the time that they are attending the schools ‘under threat’ (Figlio and Rouse, 2006). In Chicago, the introduction of school accountability was shown to raise test scores by a greater extent in schools at higher risk of being placed on probation (Jacob, 2005). Another study found that threats of sanctions on elementary schools have a persistent and positive impact on student test scores, even after the affected students have progressed into middle school (Chiang, 2009).

A variety of reasons have been offered to explain such an improvement in test scores. Rouse et al. assert that the threat of sanctions can induce schools to lengthen instructional time, change school wide schedules, and to increase planning time and professional development, thereby facilitating teachers to improve instruction (2006). Sanction threats are found to induce significant changes in the quantity, allocation, and use of educational inputs within threatened schools. These schools were found to increase school spending on instructional technology, on curricular development, and on teacher training (Chiang, 2009). However, evidence also suggests that schools divert funds and effort to meet the requirements of testing. Jacob’s research on accountability initiatives in Chicago found a corresponding decline in spending on fine arts, decreases in the ratio of aides to teachers and increases in the ratio of supervisors to teachers within lower-performing schools relative to higher performing schools (2003).

Research findings suggest that, while this type of evaluation may improve test scores, it does not lead to improved performance for all students. School ratings in systems such as *No Child Left Behind* in the United States, use test score measures based on minimum competency and they only incorporate students' test scores on a pass or fail basis. This increases incentives for schools to concentrate improvement initiatives only on the performance of those students who are on the margin of passing. Schools have been found to concentrate on these marginal students to the detriment of very low achieving students and also of high achieving students (Reback, 2007). The research found that high achieving students perform worse than usual if their performance is deemed irrelevant to the accountability requirement. Other studies have found that State-wide accountability programs have not led to reductions in high-school dropout rates or to increases in the rate of college attendance (Carnoy et al., 2003). This may be due to the focus on students who are marginal in terms of passing the state examination.

This cohort of students remain likely to graduate high school on schedule but are unlikely to advance to college (Reback, 2007).

In the UK, Perryman researches the impact of an Ofsted inspection and finds that it does improve the performance of the school in the short term (2005). However, the improvements inevitably weakens as the impact of the inspection recedes and schools resume their previous behaviours. Often, it takes the return of the inspectors to restore the improvement. Perryman maintains that this is an inevitable consequence of a regime of surveillance that relies on external monitoring to achieve the desired effect. She advocates a mixture of internal moderation and external support, so that schools would generate genuine and long-lasting change and improvement. Flynn (1992) and Neil and Johnson (2002) agree and state unequivocally that schools are more likely to maintain systems and practices that they themselves instigate and over which they claim ownership. Perryman asserts that if improvement is dependent on ‘the gaze’ of an inspector then it is difficult to maintain that improvement once the gaze has departed (2005).

Rosenthal (2004) investigates the impact of Ofsted inspections on the exam performance of students in the UK and finds no evidence of any beneficial effects on the exam results. In fact, small negative effects are sometimes found. The author suggests that the responses of teaching staff to the demands of the school inspection can result in resources being diverted away from teaching, thereby adversely affecting pupil achievement in the year of the visit. The requirements of the inspections may even act against the school’s own improvement plans over the critical period. Matthews and Sammon (2004) also found little evidence that the inspection event either enhanced or depressed results. However, they assert that inspections can play an important role as a catalyst for change and improvement and that they have had a positive impact on education, most notably in contributing to the improvement of the least effective schools.

2.9.2 Impact on the motivation of teachers

The overriding impression from the literature on school inspection is that it has a largely negative impact on the motivation of teachers. There is little doubt that external evaluation systems involving inspections are stressful and demanding. In France for

instance, the system of evaluation is criticised for causing ‘suffering and distress to both those being assessed and the assessors’ (Döbert, 2004).

Research findings indicate that these evaluation systems impact on teacher motivation in a number of undesirable ways. Firstly, the increased pressure that stems from evaluation causes teachers’ intrinsic motivation to teach, to be partly displaced by extrinsic goals such as money, ‘winning’ the school’s ranking competition, or merely the aspiration of avoiding sanctions. Secondly, imposed change is believed to create a ‘culture of compliance’ among teachers at the expense of innovation (Datnow et al., 2000, Leithwood et al., 2000). Teachers who are constrained in ways that reduce their own intrinsic motivation to teach may behave in more controlling ways and be less effective in teaching their students. Research demonstrates that perceptions of teachers as being intrinsically motivated, increase the chances of students being intrinsically motivated as well (Leithwood et al., 2000). Thirdly, evidence shows a disconnection between teachers’ personal goals and the goals of Governments. Leithwood et al. find that the majority of teachers believe that the government’s intentions for many of its policies are unrelated to improving teaching and learning and teachers find little that resonate with their own professional goals (2000). Leithwood believes that the motivation to implement Government policies might be significantly enhanced if stronger connections are made with such motives as improving the quality of teaching and learning, rather than merely reducing the budget for education or pursuing political ends.

High stakes accountability systems are found to impede the development of leadership in schools and to make the distribution of leadership more difficult and riskier. Principals are less likely to share or to distribute leadership when they are held personally accountable for the overall performance within the school. As well as that, the proliferation of top-down initiatives that emanate consistently from central government are viewed as stifling both teacher initiative and leadership capabilities (Muijs and Harris, 2006).

It could be argued that most of the aforementioned criticisms of inspection relate to high stakes accountability systems where the consequences of being found to be a ‘failing’ school are quite serious. As already mentioned, most countries have moved away from high-stakes accountability systems to the light touch external evaluation systems

described by Simons (2002) and Fitzgibbon-Taylor (1996) earlier. In Ireland, for instance, schools are generally happy with the system of WSE that has been introduced and are satisfied that the principles underpinning WSE are laudable and that the process adopted is a democratic approach (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008).

2.9.3 Unintended impacts

The sanctions associated with high stakes inspection systems have led to some unintended and undesirable outcomes. Koretz believes that school-focused accountability systems can lead to strategic responses on the part of teachers and schools (2005). The introduction of high stakes accountability sometimes leads to a narrowing of the curriculum with teachers concentrating only on those subjects that are examined, thereby leaving out topics that could be more relevant to some students. These have an added drawback of increasing professional isolation, creating barriers to collaboration and thus reduce opportunities for professional learning and development (Lo, 2012).

Advocates of standardised tests argue that teaching to the test is appropriate if tests are properly constructed to measure achievement. They claim that a yardstick for student achievement provides teachers and administrators with incentives to help students learn. However, critics of this type of regime argue that such a practice is not truly educational in nature. They argue that this system encourages children to learn to merely pass tests without the requirement for understanding of the content.

Schools have also been found to manipulate testing conditions or student classifications in order to boost observed test scores. For instance, Jacob finds that pressured schools have removed low-achieving students from school rating calculations by reclassifying them into special education where they do not impact on accountability requirements (2005). Instances of schools attempting to manipulate test results by cheating have been documented (Jacob and Levitt, 2003). A recent manifestation of this is the test-cheating cases in Atlanta Georgia in 2014, where three school Principals have been prosecuted for manipulating their students' test results. In all, thirty five public schools employees have been indicted, with eighteen pleading guilty and sixteen still to be prosecuted. The extent of the cheating indicates the pressure that Principals experience in attempting to meet what even prosecutors agree, are unrealistic targets.

2.9.4 Publication of the results

There is disagreement as to whether or not results of school evaluations should be publicised. According to some experts, it is unethical to publish school evaluation results because of the potential harm done by labelling some schools as ‘failing’. Alternatively, others argue that it would be unethical to collect information on the performance of the school and to decide that only certain stakeholders could have access to it (Haegeland et al., 2004). Proponents of publishing inspection reports maintain that public postings tend to promote parental and Government pressure for quality. The rationale is undoubtedly found in an assumption that public postings would drive learning by raising the stakes for schools and that competition may drive improvement as parents seek to choose schools on a fully informed basis (Haegeland et al., 2004). Evidence from PISA research suggests that the public release of student results has a positive impact upon student performance. In one instance where the student achievement of fifteen-year-old students was published, their scores were on average 3.5 points higher on the PISA science scale than students in schools where data was not published (OECD, 2007c).

The main criticisms of the publication of school results relate to their limitation in terms of how validly they reflect the quality of schools and the impact that publication has on the teaching staff. Comparisons between different types of schools may be unfair, unless all relevant factors are taken into account. There are many differences that need to be taken examined in such measures, such as whether the school is public or private, the differing levels of resources, staff recruitment and pupil intake. Visscher stresses that league tables should always be viewed in association with context data in order to avoid stigmatisation (2000).

Research shows that publication of tests and evaluation results can damage equality of access to education. Rutter and Maughan (2002) find that competition among schools can discourage schools from accepting or retaining children with special needs. Schools may feel that having too many pupils with special needs will lower their ratings and discourage other parents from sending their child to the school. Likewise, working in a school that has been classified as low-performing can have negative effects on both staff and students and can in turn, impede school improvement. Some teachers may avoid working in schools that are deemed to be underachieving.

Not all countries publish student performance results however. In Germany, access to school final examination results has been reduced or prohibited by the ministries. In several countries such as Denmark and Poland, publishing evaluation results, namely student performance results, is a matter for debate. As regards teacher Trade Unions, the strategy of labelling some schools as ‘failing’ is generally considered negative for the profession as a whole, and is seen as detrimental to employee motivation. The realisation that motivating teachers is a key factor in improving educational provision has caused educators to look to SSE as the preferred option in many cases to evaluate the quality standards in schools.

Despite the many theories and the reservations expressed about publishing inspection reports, an increasing demand for up-to-date and accurate information from parents, governments, the EU, businesses and society at large, it appears likely that the publishing of school reports is likely to continue.

The following section looks at the system of school evaluation that has emerged in Ireland in recent years.

2.10 Education evaluation in Ireland

In considering the history of evaluation in education in Ireland, the development of the evaluation system in the country is traced through the dual systems of WSE and SSE... The resulting impact of the two systems is also discussed.

2.10.1 Recent history of evaluation in Ireland

The origin of the renewed focus on evaluation in the Irish education system can be traced back to the publication in 1995 *Charting our Education Future*; the Government’s White Paper on Education. Prior to this, the inspection of primary schools had become sporadic, while in secondary schools, inspection had ceased almost entirely (McNamara and O’Hara, 2012). A summary of the key dates and publications that influenced the development of the modern evaluation system is provided in figure 1.2 below.

Figure 2.1: Evolution of evaluation in Ireland

	Significant publication or event
1995	Government White Paper on Education ' <i>Charting our Education Future</i> '
1996	Conference on Whole School Inspection, change term from Whole School Inspection to Whole School Evaluation
1998	The Education Act is Passed
1998	Pilot project in WSE in small number of primary and post-primary schools
1999	Revised Primary school curriculum is launched
1999	The School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) is set up to provide support and professional development to schools
1999	' <i>Developing a school plan - guidelines for primary/ post-primary schools</i> ' is published to help schools develop school plans.
2002	Introduction of ' <i>The Professional Code of Practice on Evaluating and Reporting for the Inspectorate</i>
2003	Whole School Evaluation is introduced
2003	<i>Looking at Our School: 'An Aid to Self-Evaluation in Second-Level Schools'</i> published to help schools introduce self-evaluation
2004	LAOS is implemented in Irish schools for the first time
2006	<i>A Guide to Whole-School Evaluation in Primary/ Post-Primary Schools</i> outlines the procedures that are to be followed when carrying out WSE in schools.
2008	The Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) is established following the amalgamation of the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (PCSP) and the School Development Planning Service (SDPS).
2010	' <i>Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning</i> is introduced.
2011	' <i>Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020</i> ' requires all schools to engage in SSE
2011	<i>Programme for Government</i> sets out specific targets in relation to SSE
2012	' <i>School Self-Evaluation: Guidelines for Primary/ Post primary schools–Inspectors Guidelines for Schools</i> ' is published to help schools implement SSE process
2012	Department of Education and Skills Circular 0039/2012 requires all post-primary schools to engage in SSE

In fact, the teachers, supported by the large teacher unions, refused to teach in front of the inspectorate at one point (Chevalier, Dolton and Levacic, 2004). The White Paper indicated the intention to develop the school evaluation system within a broad framework of school improvement, system improvement and accountability. In consultation with the education partners, the existing *Tuairiscí Scoile* model of school inspections was replaced by Whole School Inspection. In 1996, at a conference on Whole School Inspection, it was decided that the term Whole School Evaluation should replace Whole School Inspection. Since then, a plethora of documents and policies have been introduced into the Irish education system.

The Education Act (The Act) was passed in 1998 and it clearly outlines the role of the inspectorate and it also details schools' requirements regarding school planning. Furthermore, the Act clearly delineates the responsibility of the Minister for Education and Science with regard to quality assurance within the education system generally. The Act established the inspectorate on a statutory basis and clearly outlined its functions.

The *Professional Code of Practice on Evaluating and Reporting for the Inspectorate* (Department of Education and Science, 2002a) which was introduced in 2002 provides the guiding principles that inform the work of inspectors. Among its general principles is a commitment to fostering mutual respect and trust as a foundation for the development of a positive professional relationship between inspectorate and school communities (McNamara and O'Hara 2012, p.5).

2.10.2 Looking at our Schools (LAOS)

Following a three year pilot project, and after extensive negotiations with the powerful teacher unions, the DES in Ireland produces a document entitled *Looking at our Schools (LAOS)* in 2003. The purpose of this document is to facilitate self-evaluation as a central component of the continuous planning process. The document contains five *areas* of evaluation:

- (a) quality of learning and teaching in subjects
- (b) quality of support for students
- (c) quality of school management
- (d) quality of school planning
- (e) quality of curriculum provision (DES, 2003)

These five areas are subdivided into some 143 ‘themes for self-evaluation’ and the intention is that schools will evaluate themselves against broad themes by gathering evidence and rating themselves on a four point rating scale in relation to each theme. This internal evaluation will then be used by departmental inspectors in the course of a WSE. While the *LAOS* system was introduced in 2003 it was not implemented until 2004.

The important feature of *Looking at Our Schools* (LAOS) is that it heralded a shift away from external evaluation towards internal review and self-evaluation. In 2006 the DES published two guides to help schools navigate the WSE process. *A Guide to Whole-School Evaluation in Primary Schools/ Post-Primary Schools* outlined the procedures that were to be followed when carrying out WSE in schools. The DES describes what has emerged thus:

Ireland, along with other European countries, is adopting a model of quality assurance that emphasises school development planning through internal school review and self-evaluation with the support of external evaluation carried out by the Inspectorate. (DES 2003, p.viii)

‘In effect, the policy is that school self-evaluation will act as a preparation for inspection but, more importantly, it is also to be the driving force for collaborative internal school improvement efforts’ assert McNamara and O’Hara (2012, p.13).

2.10.3 Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning

In 2010 an important policy revision in relation to school evaluation occurred when the DES released a new inspection policy document ‘*Whole School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE-MLL)*’. While this document reaffirms *LAOS* as the key framework document of school evaluation, it makes significant changes to the system. McNamara and O’Hara (2012) state that the document puts a sharper focus on some aspects of the evidence to be used for school self-evaluation and in external inspections. The Department requires schools to survey parent and student anonymously ‘to gain insights into the views of parents and students on the performance and operation of the school’ (DES 2010, p.2). The new document places greater responsibility on the school to report on its own SSE processes. This report must

be made available to the external inspectors to explain ‘the impact of school self - evaluation on school improvement and the implementation of recommendations of previous evaluations’ (ibid, p. 2). A major development of the new document is that schools who fall below an acceptable performance threshold determined by the inspectorate may be subjected to an inspection. McNamara and O’Hara explains that ‘in cases where school performance is deemed inadequate by whatever measurement, “working groups” including inspectors will be established to address serious weaknesses’ (2012, p.19).

2.10.4 Programme for Government

A renewed focus on self-evaluation arises from the *Programme for Government 2011*, which set out specific targets in relation to self-evaluation and school improvement. Similarly, the National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy titled “*Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020*” requires all schools to engage in robust self-evaluation. In 2012, two publications set out how schools are expected to carry out self-evaluation: “*An Introduction to School Self-Evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Primary Schools - Inspectorate Guidelines for School’s* and “*An Introduction to School Self-Evaluation of Teaching and Learning in Post-Primary Schools - Inspectorate Guidelines for Schools*”. These documents present a simplified approach to self-evaluation. A circular from the DES states that

Over a four-year period from 2012, all post-primary schools should engage in robust school self-evaluation and produce three-year improvement plans for Mathematics and numeracy, literacy (English in English medium schools and Irish and English in Irish medium schools) and one or more aspects of teaching and learning across all subjects and programmes

(DES Circular 0039/2012)

It further states that: ‘In the school year 2012/13, schools should start the process of self-evaluation. Each year they should select one of the following options: literacy, numeracy, aspects of teaching and learning’ (DES Circular 0039/2012). These publications, coupled with the provision of in-service training for Principals have increased the urgency in schools to engage in school self-evaluation. The two systems of evaluation in Ireland, WSE and SSE, are worthy of discussion in further detail.

2.11 Whole School Evaluation

WSE is introduced into the education system at both primary and post-primary level during the school year 2003-2004. WSE is a process of external evaluation of the work of a school carried out by the Inspectorate. The DES explains, that the process is designed ‘to monitor and assess the quality, economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the education system provided in the state by recognised schools and centres of education’ (2006, p.2). So far, WSE has received positive feedback from stakeholders and the system is generally seen as a workable form of school evaluation. The DES also contend that WSE is a viable and effective approach to evaluating the functioning of schools and that it is acknowledged by both schools and the members of the Inspectorate to be an effective model (1999). Inspectors report a high level of cooperation from the schools involved and Principals feel that WSE can make a significant contribution to the planning processes in schools. The potentially controversial practice of inspectors’ observation of teachers in their classroom and their subsequent interaction with pupils are successfully implemented, according to McNamara and O’Hara (2009). Such reporting is somehow at odds with the rather negative perspective on inspection that is outlined earlier in this. The OECD attributes the success of the system to the fact that the system is ‘positive, affirming and developmental rather than punitive or negative’ (2007, p.410).

2.11.1 Positives of WSE in Ireland

WSE is found to have a number of positive impacts on school staff. A report by McNamara and O’Hara (2009, p.70) states that the process brings staff together as teachers work side by side to update their plans and to engage in collaboration. They reveal that teachers generally find the process supportive and affirming and they welcome the opportunity to take stock and to review their current policies and procedures. Schools are also satisfied that the process adopted is democratic in nature, that it involves the teaching staff and representatives of Boards of Management and parents’ bodies. A DES report finds that preparing for WSE increases the feeling of ownership by staff in the school improvement process (DES, 1999). This suggests that WSE can have a positive effect on empowerment levels within schools if it is carried out in the appropriate manner. Although the overall appraisal of WSE is positive, a number of drawbacks are identified.

2.11.2 Negatives of WSE in Ireland

The stress related to external evaluation identified by Dobert (2004) is also evidenced in the Irish system. The notion of being observed by an external inspector is stressful and it is seen as creating additional workload for teachers (DES, 1999). Other findings in the DES's 1999 report suggest that some teachers perceive WSE as a formal, bureaucratic and time-consuming exercise that yields little benefit to schools, teachers or pupils. Many Principals express an opinion that the emphasis on 'whole school' results in a perception that it was the management mainly that is being evaluated. They are also critical that schools are given no help or support in addressing the issues and problems that are identified by the inspectorate through the process. This reported lack of support fuels the view that the Department is not really interested in the developmental aspect of evaluation, but rather, it is more concerned with accountability and control (DES, 1999). This is at odds with the view put forward earlier that inspection provides an audit of the school, that it provides a checklist of things that need to be improved in the school as well as a baseline from which a school can compare itself (Van Hoof and Van Petegem, 2012).

While final WSE reports are well received by Principals, who report that a fair and objective picture of their schools have been drawn in general, the inspectors are critical of the final report that they themselves write (DES, 1999). They admit that for 'political' reasons and due to the sensitivities involved, reports tend to be very general, superficial and bland. This indicates an awareness on the part of the inspectorate regarding the sensitivities of the environments in which schools operate. The publishing of the reports on the DES website is instigated in 2005 and consequently it puts pressure on the inspectorate to be guarded in their use of language. This move to publish the reports on-line also conditions Principals to adopt a defensive attitude towards any negative commentary that might appear in the report.

A major drawback of WSE in Ireland is the absence of systematic, evidence-based data gathering. Inspectors reported that there is lack of 'hard data' on the performance of the schools available to them (DES, 1999). McNamara and O'Hara (2009) assert that very little data is available about any facet of the operation of schools in Ireland and they find little evidence that schools in Ireland are engaging in any meaningful way with self-evaluation. While a greater focus on self-evaluation arises from the Programme for Government 2011, the National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy and the

publication of the Guidelines for the introduction of SSE in schools in 2012, SSE could still be said to be in its infancy in Ireland in 2014.

2.12 School Self-evaluation

As stated previously, a shift is perceived away from confrontational forms of school evaluation that are primarily concerned with external accountability and toward internal systems that focus more on capacity building for self-evaluation and for professional development (MacBeath 2006; McNamara and O'Hara 2005 and 2008; Nevo 2006). The trend continues therefore towards school self-evaluation and aims to raise standards through 'a sharper, more focussed and less bureaucratic' evaluation system (Ofsted 2004a, p.3). Self-evaluation is now understood as a continuum, ranging from a restricted view that focuses purely on the school's outcomes, to a broad perspective in which the school's input, processes and outputs are assessed (Hofman, Dijkstra and Hofman 2005). A restricted view could be a single measurement instrument, such as a satisfaction survey, while a broader perspective might involve activities such as goal-setting, school planning and defining new improvement measures that are more in tune with school effectiveness and with school improvement theories.

According to the DES guidelines, self-evaluation is 'a collaborative, inclusive, reflective process of internal school review (DES 2012, p.12). Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) give a more comprehensive definition, viewing self-evaluation as:

a cyclical process, whereby a school itself describes and assesses, on its own initiative and from a global quality-assurance concept, aspects of its own functioning in a systematic manner with the aim (if necessary) of arriving at specific improvement processes.

This description includes some components which can help educators implement and assess self-evaluation processes:

- *As a cyclical process*, self-evaluation is not a one-off process but rather it is part of a framework with a clear intention to repeat the process in order to experience value through evolution and over time.
- The school is responsible for the design and implementation of the self-evaluation process itself.
- *It operates on its own initiative*: The school itself initiates the process.

- *From a global quality-assurance concept*: The self-evaluation process is designed on the basis of a clear vision of what form quality education would take in the school.
- *Systematic description*: It involves the systematic gathering and the analysis of information.
- *Systematic assessment*: Testing them against the broader quality-assurance concept assesses the findings.
- *Arriving at specific improvement processes*: The aim of self-evaluation is to arrive at an action plan that will contribute to improvement. A high-quality self-evaluation is not limited to the determination of findings but must result in the undertaking of actions.

According to Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) not all of these components are necessary for a process to be deemed self-evaluation. However the definition provides a useful checklist of criteria of what constitute an effective self-evaluation system.

The goal of SSE is to transfer responsibility for school improvement and pupil achievement from central authority to individual schools and teachers. SSE empowers a school to affirm good practice, to identify areas that merit improvement and to decide on actions that will improve those areas. According to the DES 'it gives teachers and schools the opportunity to tell their own story' (2012, p.8). Pounce contends that the purpose of school self-evaluation is to identify ways in which the school can be improved (2012). MacBeath emphasises the reflective and dynamic nature of SSE, suggesting it is 'a continuing process of reflection... a paradigm shift from a passive and compliant role to an active role in which teachers are the prime movers' (2008, p.396).

2.12.1 Self-evaluation in Ireland

SSE is introduced into Ireland in 2004, though in reality, it is only since 2011 that it is operating in any significant way in schools. McNamara and O'Hara state that, 'this cannot be regarded as surprising since other than rhetoric and exhortation, little or no support or guidance has been given to empower such a development' (2008, p.102). To facilitate SSE as a central component of the continuous planning process, the Inspectorate publishes two guides: *School Self Evaluation Guidelines for Primary Schools* (The Guide) and *School Self Evaluation Guidelines for Post-Primary Schools*

(DES, 2012). These provide schools with a framework for supporting an internal review of school policies and procedures. They help promote school effectiveness and improvement in the broad areas of management, planning, learning, teaching and supports for students. The Guide focuses on three key dimensions of school provision: teaching and learning, Management and Leadership and support for children. In response to the criticism that the initial SSE process described in *LAOS* was too complex and involved 5 areas with 143 themes, the current Guide focuses on the narrow dimensions of teaching and learning. It provides practical suggestions as to how schools might make judgments about practice and about how well their students are doing. They include evaluation criteria to guide schools in making quality judgments about their work, and sample school self-evaluation tools to assist in the gathering of evidence (DES 2012, p.9). Schools are required to produce a School Report and School Improvement Plan (SIP) each year and these are required to be made available to the whole school community (Inspectorate, 2012b). In the SIP, schools identify measurable targets or ‘a quantifiable change in performance level to be attained within a specified time’ (Inspectorate 2014b, p.4). The Guide clarifies further that all targets must have identified success criteria and that all actions identified should relate directly to the targets identified. This reflects the views of Saunders (1999) who associated SSE as a system of target setting where year-on-year measurable improvements are sought in students’ work.

The Irish model of evaluation is a blend of internal and external evaluation with a very definite move from external monitoring towards internal review and self-evaluation. The DES explains the vision of evaluation as ‘a model of quality assurance that emphasizes school development planning through internal school review and self-evaluation, with the support of external evaluation carried out by the Inspectorate’ (2003, p.4). Swaffield and MacBeath assert that most models of SSE are a kin to a review or audit ‘with its own rhythm of planning, data collection, analysis, presentation of findings and agreeing next steps’ (2005, p.248). There is a definite move to align with the sequential model of SSE, where external inspection uses the findings from the internal evaluation as a core for inspection (Alvik, 1996).

2.12.2 Assessment of SSE in Ireland

The system emerging in Ireland represents an excellent example of a hybrid model of evaluation according to McNamara and O'Hara (2008). SSE begins to take hold in Irish schools and more in-service courses are provided to schools on the practicalities of conducting SSE through data gather and on to data analysis. The Inspectorate exert increased pressure on schools to engage them in the process with the publication of the Guidelines and Circular 0040/2012 is issued to all schools at the start of the 2012 school year. This circular stipulates that henceforth, schools are required to engage in school self-evaluation. The circular asserted that, 'A whole-school approach to the self-evaluation and improvement of teaching and learning, including literacy and numeracy, should be adopted' (2012, p.2) and a sense of urgency underpins the publication. As reported above, the WSE-MLL document stipulates that schools should maintain an up-to-date SSE report for inspection. The stated intention is that 'as schools engage in robust school self-evaluation processes that are informed by evidence-based judgements, the approach to external evaluation will change. External evaluation processes such as WSE will take increased account of the self-evaluation engaged in by schools' (DES Guidelines 2012, p.13).

McNamara and O'Hara (2012) identify key assumptions that underpin the SSE process as prescribed in the LAOS document. Firstly, the *LAOS* document envisages the school management and staff making "professional judgments regarding the operation of the school" (DES 2003, p.ix). McNamara and O'Hara (2012) challenge this assumption, contending that schools have not got the skills and resources to either gather evidence or to make judgements about the school performance. According to the *LAOS* document, schools will "engage in a process of collecting and analysing information" and on this "evidence" "statements" will be made (DES 2003, p.x). McNamara and O'Hara (2012) argue that these assertions ignore the fact that schools in Ireland have very little data available about any facet of their operation. There is widespread recognition that Irish post-primary schools have a poor record with measuring standards of achievement and progress (Mathews 2010 in McNamara and O'Hara, 2012). There is a lack of availability of standardised tests for post-primary schools and therefore inadequate comparative data and benchmarks that are sufficiently contextualised to draw conclusions about student outcomes (McNamara and O'Hara, 2006). However, the

DES is currently making available data on results from state examination with the intention that schools can use them to benchmark their own exam results. There has been little effort to incorporate different forms of self-evaluation such as peer review and peer observation. McNamara and O’ Hara state that, ‘although school self evaluation underpins the theoretical framework of *LAOS* there is no attempt made in the framework to define and encourage the conditions which would make it possible in practice’ (2012, p.17).

Despite such criticisms, SSE is gradually becoming an established feature on the Irish educational landscape. The DES continues to produce more tools and resources for schools but a huge deficit in expertise, time and resources still hinders the roll-out and development of SSE. Not least of these is the lack of personnel available in schools, particularly at middle management level to carry out the work necessary to produce effective self-evaluation.

2.12.3 SSE in other countries

There is much evidence that a shift to some form of self-evaluation has spread to practically every developed country in recent time. John MacBeath asserts that ‘self-evaluation is now seen as a matter of priority in most economically advanced countries of the world’ (2003, p.2). McNamara and O’Hara (2008), however, point out that most countries still advocate an, ‘external, inspectorate-led accountability structure’ and this echoes the point made above, that governments remain reluctant by and large to relinquish responsibility for education to schools and teachers (2008, p.107).

While the trend towards greater decentralisation of responsibility to schools is clear, there are also some differences between systems, most notably the difference in the levels of autonomy granted to schools. In Finland, teachers have a great deal of autonomy at the school and classroom levels (Sclafani, 2008). The Finnish National Board of Education suggests that student self-evaluation is one of the best ways to develop the habits of mind that encourage lifelong learning (2008).

In England too, there was a dramatic shift from a rigorous inspection regime to school self-evaluation following on from the changes to the *Framework for the Inspection of Schools* in 2005. The new framework included a strong emphasis on school self-evaluation which is seen as a starting point for school inspection. The government

launched a *New Relationship with School* (Ofsted, 2004) which attempted to refine and link internal self-evaluation to external review. Until recently, there was a clear expectation that self-evaluation would have occurred at some stage prior to inspection, and schools are asked to record self-evaluation findings in a standardised self-evaluation form (SEF) that is used as a basis for discussion during inspections. In theory, schools have a good deal of autonomy, but in practice schools are expected to adhere closely to the topics and themes identified in the evaluation form. Critics of the systems suggested that it seems to be designed to engender what Power has termed ‘pathologies of creative compliance’ (1997). Hofman et al. assert that a great deal of energy is expended on replicating Ofsted systems within schools and second-guessing what grading the inspectors might make (2009).

These criticisms have led to a move away from centralised prescription upon schools. Since 2011, schools are no longer required to complete the online SEF forms. The abolition of the SEF form has received a mixed response. As schools were required by the inspection agencies to complete the SEF, some schools structured their whole school self-evaluation process around the form only. Now however, schools are free to adapt the Ofsted model, devise their own framework or to adopt one of a range of alternatives that have been developed (MacBeath, 2005a). Despite abolishing the SEF, form the strong focus on promoting self-evaluation in schools has still been maintained by Ofsted.

SSE was introduced in Scotland in 1992 as part of a wider shift in accountability in the public sector. The key document that guided self-evaluation in Scotland was titled “*How Good is our School?*” but this document was updated in 2007 to “*How Good Are We Now?*” Both documents provide a quality framework for self-evaluation that aims to support the integration of knowledge across different services. The Scottish school national quality assurance and school development system is based on a combination of inspection of schools by HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) and self-evaluation by schools using quality indicators documented in “*How Good is Our School?*” (Chapman and Sammons, 2013). In Scotland, the views of parents, staff and pupils are surveyed and furthermore, members of the community are involved as members of inspection teams as part of the evaluation processes.

In the Netherlands, schools are accustomed to considerable autonomy. Since August 1998, the Dutch 'Quality Law' prescribes that schools are responsible for the quality of education they provide and for pursuing policies that ensure school improvement. The law also prescribes that all schools must develop a quality assurance system. The Dutch Inspectorate places a high value on SSE in comparison to most other countries. The school inspectorate will use the results of school self-evaluations when they deem the schools own evaluations to be up to standard. The inspectorate should not re-investigate aspects of the quality of education that have already been evaluated properly by the school itself. Furthermore, an evaluation that is seen to be effectively carried out may result in a less intensive evaluation by the inspectorate, in recognition of the autonomy of schools and to encourage improvements in education.

Schools in Flanders in Belgium receive even more autonomy and self-regulation is expected of schools. In contrast with the Netherlands, England and Scotland, the Flanders Government does not formally oblige schools to engage in school self-evaluation. However, a trend to combine internal evaluation by schools (SSE) and external evaluation can be observed. In Flanders, schools can decide to show their results of school self-evaluations during the audit of the inspectorate, but the inspectorate cannot demand them. However, Flemish schools are also expected to engage in some type of school self-evaluation although how they carry it out is not stipulated by the government (Janssens and Amelsvoor, 2008). In Belgium, the existence of the SSE or similar forms of school planning/bidding for resources serves as a basis for part of the school funding.

In France, there is a weak culture of evaluation and the Ministry sends indicators to schools to assist them in the process of evaluation. Janssens and Amelsvoor assert that these indicators are used at best by 5% of the schools (2008). Local administrators cite a lack the time and skills for their poor evaluation culture with the effect that there are no external incentives for self- evaluation (Lepage, 2000).

Self-evaluation was introduced into Iceland in 1995 for primary schools and in 1996 for secondary schools. The Ministry of Education planned to inspect the schools' self-evaluation methods every five years despite the fact that the legislation does not provide guidelines, models, or training opportunities for schools to acquire evaluation skills, nor to build capacity by using evaluation to inform school improvement (McNamara et al.,

2011). In fact, little was done to support the schools in their self-evaluation efforts other than the Ministry publishing a booklet stating the criteria that would be used for the proposed inspections (Ministry of Education, 1997). To overcome this dearth of resources, schools made use of available university courses and workshops provided teachers with tools and strategies in self-evaluation such as action research approaches. The Ministry did make grant funding available to schools so that they could get help from external consultants in developing evaluation systems. The Icelandic educational system places great value on independence and on individual initiative, a value that contributes to the belief that schools could develop their own self-evaluation systems.

Schools in Iceland struggle with huge amount of data collection and complain about the lack of both manpower and necessary skills (McNamara et al., 2011). However, when teachers are coached to decide for themselves which data would help them seek answers to relevant questions and which data would help them in modifying their own classroom practice, remarkable changes take place within the schools and in the school ethos in general. McNamara et al. (2011) maintain that a number of factors contribute to this revelation as self-evaluation becomes firmly established in Icelandic system:

- (a) A team approach to development of evaluations is used
- (b) Leaders and teachers collect, use, and share data to improve teaching and learning
- (c) Leadership is empowering
- (d) Numerous opportunities exist for professional development and growth
- (e) School culture has been evolving from one of teacher isolation to one of collaboration.

(McNamara et al. 2011, p.74).

What emerges in most countries in the OECD is a hybrid system of internal self-evaluation and external review. The emerging models display several discernible common characteristics. Firstly, an emphasis on self-evaluation with light-touch external inspection; secondly, respect for many forms and sources of data and knowledge, not just quantified student attainment data that informs improvement; and thirdly, prioritisation of organisational and professional capacity building over-monitoring and control (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008).

2.13 Implementation of self-evaluation

Many schools have great difficulty in integrating school self-evaluation processes into their routines. Brighthouse and Woods point out that ‘most schools find it difficult to establish a virtuous cycle of self-review and then to sustain it’ (1999, p.19). A number of important conditions are highlighted in the literature as being central to the introduction and sustainability of self-evaluation. These include, trust, leadership, partnership, time, having a shared vision, training and support, being responsive and reflective.

2.13.1 Trust

One of the buttresses of self-evaluation is trust. Teachers must trust that information provided to the inspectorate will not be used to impact negatively on them or the school if they are to provide honest assessments. Most importantly, schools must trust teachers to fully engage in the process and to be open to change. Teachers must also trust that the school management will seriously embrace the suggestions and initiatives that they generate. Building a culture of trust and openness is dependent however on strong leadership.

2.13.2 Leadership

Strong leadership is of critical importance to the success of SSE. The role of the Principal is crucial as he or she must establish the structures and resources to sustain the process. Principals must also create the environment and culture wherein individuals feel free to contribute to the evaluation process. While head teachers clearly have a central role to play in the management of SSE, leadership during the process is not a matter for the Principal alone. Harris asserts that effective leaders are aware of the importance of providing leadership opportunities to other people in order to get the best results from self-evaluation activities (2004). Leadership opportunities can take the form of heading up a project team or leading some part of a project. The head teacher must be a driving force but does not necessarily need to assume the responsibility for carrying out the self-evaluation process personally. Successful SSE requires the sharing of leadership and a partnership approach (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2012). Evidence

suggests that the best chance of success is a combination of strong leadership and participative decision-making.

2.13.3 Partnership

Self-evaluations can succeed only if there is a sense of partnership among the participants. Vanhoof and Van Petegem assert that self-evaluation has a greater chance of success in schools where collaboration is highly valued (2012). This entails team members thinking in a team-oriented way and believing that they can achieve better results by working together. They describe this as a 'collégial atmosphere' or as a 'safe climate'. In their research Vanhoof and Van Petegem found that the more leadership was shared and the more effective the communication was, the higher the quality of self-evaluation (2012). Teachers must feel the support of their colleagues working together as a team; teamwork must be seen as something positive and not as a threat to the individual's own autonomy.

Vanhoof and Van Petegem suggest that the quality of the self-evaluation is higher in schools that have an 'appropriate' level of participation of teaching staff in decision-making during the self-evaluation (2012). Interestingly, they found that too much participation appears to have a negative influence on the results of the self-evaluation. By an appropriate participation they mean striking the right balance between expertise and participation of those involved in the self-evaluation process.

2.13.4 Shared Vision

Research suggests that self-evaluation systems that are linked to the overall vision of the school have a better chance of success. The participants must have a clear vision of what constitutes good-quality education in their school. Vanhoof and VanPetegem assert that self-evaluations should be integrated into the existing way of thinking and into existing structures in the school. The aims of self-evaluation must be clear for all those involved, and there must be no hidden agendas (2012).

In order to achieve high-quality self-evaluation, not only do the objectives of the process have to be clear, but they must also be shared and assimilated by the entire school team. Both the school management and the teaching staff must be convinced of the value of the self-evaluation and of the suitability of the themes chosen. Vanhoof and

Van Petegem's (2012) argue that the extent to which the school team endorses the self-evaluation process, and what they says about it in private are predictors of the quality of self-evaluations.

2.13.5 Training and support

The success of self-evaluation is very much dependent on the capacity of teachers to carry out research into their own practices and the performance of their school. Blok et al. asserts that school evaluation is a very difficult task for most schools (2007). They need to know, for example, how to promote involvement and ownership; how to gather and interpret self-evaluation data; and how to devise and implement measures to improve the functioning of the school based on the self-evaluation results. Townsend points out that evaluation does not automatically translate into positive information for schools (2007).

Vanhoof, Van Petegem and Visschera are pessimistic about some schools capacity to engage in school self-evaluation effectively (2012). There is overwhelming evidence which demonstrates that most teachers and schools lack the appropriate support to implement the recommendations from evaluations. Most schools and local authorities lack the kinds of information systems that would provide high-quality data on student outcomes (Townsend, 2007). Several countries such as England and France have started to collate information in order to help schools leaders engage in the evaluation process. Personalised indicators are provided that are ready for use and these are accompanied by references to national, regional or departmental averages, thereby allowing them to situate themselves against others (Döbert et al., 2004). There is little evidence of any such provision in the Irish system as yet.

In the United States and elsewhere, an increasing number of schools face the challenge of meeting higher performance standards but without significant increases in funding or support (Bowen et al., 2006). Plowright finds that school Principals are positive towards self-evaluation, but insist that they need more support in their use of the process (2008). Janssens and VanAmelsvoort report on SSE research in seven European Union countries and suggest that 'optimal outcomes can be achieved if the inspectorate provided guidelines, instructions and examples to schools' and suggest that training in

self-evaluation should be given to ‘enhance control over the self-evaluation documents produced by schools’ (2008, p.16).

2.13.6 Reflection and readiness to change

In order to achieve high-quality self-evaluations, team members must be prepared to reflect honestly and in an open manner on their own functioning. Self-evaluation is, in effect, a systematic form of reflection. Reflection refers to the readiness to question the existing state of affairs and to consider alternatives. It is the personal willingness of the team members to reflect upon and review their own approaches and professional practice (York-Barr et al., 2001). According to Van Petegem et al. the reflective capacity of schools is arguably the most crucial factor in achieving a high-quality self-evaluation. It could be argued that the dominant culture in many schools is one of ‘getting things done’ with little or no attention paid to reflection and learning (2005a).

Closely related to a willingness to reflect is a readiness to change. Vanhoof and Van Petegem refer to an ‘improvement culture’, or the extent to which problems and weak points which emerge during the self-evaluation are seen as opportunities or challenges (2012). A self-evaluation inspired by innovation depends on an approach that shows openness to new ideas and new ways of working. In order to derive appropriate action plans from a self-evaluation, schools have to be ready to risk proposing innovations and possible experiments in the self-evaluation process (Geijsel 2001, p.45). Innovative self-evaluation means daring to break away from the traditional frames of reference, taking the time to experiment and accepting that sometimes mistakes will be made. Such rationalising resonates with the efforts of the various school improvement theorists mentioned earlier in this chapter.

2.13.7 Time

Self-evaluation is not a one off event; it requires time and effort. Leung contends that teachers need to have the enthusiasm to devote time and effort to self-evaluation in order for it to succeed (2005). Teachers need time to learn how to engage in data collection and analysis; they need time to assimilate the information and make appropriate decisions and to devise plans and develop policies. The implementation of these plans also takes time as they have to be monitored and adjusted throughout the

process. Change in the education system comes slowly. It may take a cohort of pupils to go through the school system before the impact of an initiative may become obvious.

Research suggests that schools should not be over-ambitious when embarking on a self-evaluation process. Vanhoof and Van Petegem assert that schools need to work on an achievable route, not only in terms of the complexity of the content, but also with regard to the duration and scale of the survey (2012). They assert that schools often underestimate the complexity of the school environment and the self-evaluation process. Allotting sufficient time and resources for each of the various steps in the self-evaluation process is crucial. They recommend starting in a phased manner, taking small steps and allowing sufficient time for the consolidation of improvements made. They contend that high-quality self-evaluation requires a systematic follow-up system which makes it possible to establish what was successful and what failed during the self-evaluation process.

Individual teachers need to be allocated time to participate in the evaluation process. Vanhoof and Van Petegem found that many schools are wrestling with the question of how to calculate the time allocation for participating staff (2012). Where additional tasks are expected of teachers, they must, as a matter of fairness, be provided with the necessary time to complete them.

2.13.8 Impact of self-evaluation

A number of difficulties arise in determining and measuring the impact of any school evaluation initiative. When analysing the impact of SSE specifically, it has to be recognised that the empirical evidence concerning the quality of self-evaluation is still limited because the field of school self-evaluation is still at an early stage of development (Kyriakides and Campbell, 2004). Moreover, research on the effects of school evaluation schemes is highly dependent on the quality of the available data and the availability of good quality evidence in schools is limited (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). The existence of data does not necessarily imply the ability of researchers to assess the impact of school evaluation. Döbert et al. points out that in many cases several reforms initiatives can be introduced at the same time and it may be difficult to disentangle the impact of different programs (2004).

Notwithstanding the above, an analysis of the literature on self-evaluation reveals that the underlying tone is largely positive and that expectations with regard to the results of self-evaluation are high (McNamara and O'Hara, 2008). In England, a mixed response has been reported to the introduction of SSE. On the positive note, self-evaluation grants the school ownership of its own improvement processes and provides opportunities for all stakeholders to become involved. By and large, stakeholders in the UK see SSE as an integral part of the school improvement process and they welcome the Self-Evaluation Form as a useful tool for carrying out the evaluation.

Research demonstrates a positive relationship between SSE and the performance of schools. Hofman et al. (2009), in their study of the teaching of mathematics in Dutch primary schools, found that schools with more advanced SSE systems scored highest in mathematics. Conversely, schools that implemented few SSE measures, scored lower. A significant relationship was found between the quality of the teaching-learning process and engagement with the SSE process (Hofman et al., 2009). In the estimation of the Inspectorate, schools with an advanced SSE process have a higher quality of educational provision than the rest of the schools in the study; this was witnessed across a wide range of aspects, including curriculum, the use of the available learning time, the pedagogical and didactic performances of teachers. The school climate, harmonization with the educational needs of pupils, an active and independent role for pupils, and finally, a higher quality of support and guidance for pupils were all considered. Hofman et al. (2009) conclude that 'implementing an average or even minimal SSE policy seems to be better than having opposing accountability and improvement policies' (p.64).

Principals, in general, are positive towards the process of self-evaluation and are more convinced of its usefulness than teaching staff (Van Petegem et al., 2005a). The poor support from some teachers for self-evaluation may be due to the perception that self-evaluation entails more work for them with little benefit accruing. Hofman et al. found that teachers experienced pressures on time, increased emotional burdens, and that self-evaluation impacted adversely on their home life (2009).

Many teachers view self-evaluation as a bureaucratic exercise that involves fulfilling the requirements of the inspectorate. They view self-evaluation more as self-inspection than a genuine exercise in school improvement. Some teachers feel oppressed and professionally compromised; engaged in activity that is more about compliance than

educational endeavour. Hall and Noyes (2009) suggest that the focus of some evaluations seems to be predominantly on systems which ‘measure the measurable’ (Power 1997). The recent move away from the use of the SEF form heralds a move to provide a less bureaucratic process and focuses on increasing the capacity of schools to engage in SSE.

According to Hofman et al. the expected improvement in relations between Ofsted and schools has not materialised (2009). Few teachers recorded the relationship as being more supportive, collaborative or inclined to take account of their own professional standpoints. A considerable number of teachers regard self-evaluation initiatives as threatening because it is too much under the control of principals (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2012). Where the decision to carry out a self-evaluation is taken by the school management alone, a feeling of being coerced into participating is experienced.

As mentioned previously, the evolution of SSE in Iceland shows that when teachers are given support, then the process becomes an enriching experience. The Icelandic model actively demonstrates many of the principles highlighted earlier. These include collaboration, team work, the provision of CPD, and the empowerment of teaching staff (McNamara et al., 2011). Participation on evaluation teams is voluntary and concerns regarding data collection and analysis are addressed with the provision of training. Moreover, the observation of teachers by school leaders is seen as intrusive and unnecessary. In effect, the process became a teacher-led programme of internal school improvement that places a high value on teachers’ professionalism.

2.14 Summary

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to the topic of school evaluation. Key questions relating to evaluation, and to its capacity for improving the quality of education provision in a school, are addressed. Various efforts to improve education provision, such as school improvement theory, school effectiveness and the creating of communities of learning are explored with a view to gaining insights into best practice relating to improving educational provision. The literature review concludes by narrowing the investigation to specifically focus on inspection and school self-evaluation.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore the topic of evaluation in an Irish school setting. The key question driving the research is:

What impact has school evaluation on the teaching staff in an Irish post-primary school?

Three associated questions are addressed to shine light on the main research question:

1. What is the purpose of school evaluation- development or accountability?
2. Who should carry out the evaluation- external agents or internal stakeholders?
3. What form should the evaluation take- inspection or self-evaluation?

To answer these questions the study uses a case study research design to explore SSE in its own setting. It also researches the impact of a WSE on the staff as it took place in the school. This chapter presents the methodological framework for the research, and the key issues relating to the choice of paradigm underpinning the research are explored. A discussion of the main methodologies employed in the study is presented. The rationale for the case study research design is provided. Other relevant issues such as data gathering, sampling, and the two main research methods used in the research interviews and questionnaires are outlined. Finally, the issues of rigour, validity, ethics and the limitations of the study are addressed.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Before commencing any research and deciding on a methodology and related methods, it is important to consider one's own world view or set of beliefs, as these will undoubtedly impinge on how the research is undertaken and interpreted (Morgan, 2007). The model of reality that one constructs and that informs how one engages with the world is called a paradigm. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) define a paradigm as, 'a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers have in common regarding the nature and conduct of research' (p.24). Shanks (2002) asserts that paradigms are human constructs that relates to the nature of social reality, and

should be understood as assumptions that are neither correct nor incorrect. It is the responsibility of the researcher to argue their value and to assess their impact on the research methodologies employed. An understanding of one's own worldview can help to answer three important questions that are relevant to the choice of methodology:

- a) What is my perception of the nature of reality? (The ontological dimension).
- b) What is my belief about how knowledge is created and presented? (The epistemological dimension).
- c) How can I find out if what I believe can be known? (The methodological dimension).

3.2.1 The ontological dimension

Ontological assumptions concern the nature of reality. The two main ontological possibilities are Realism and Nominalism, though perceptions of reality can exist along a continuum between the two. Realism, also called naturalism, is the paradigm underpinning traditional research and assumes that reality exists independently of our experiencing of it. Realists believe that we can 'gain access to that world by thinking, observing and recording our experiences carefully' (Moses and Knutsen 2007, p.8). Conversely, proponents of nominalism contend that 'reality is socially constructed, that individuals develop subjective meanings of their own personal experience, and that this gives way to multiple meanings' (Bloomberg and Volpe 2008, p.9). Nominalists believe that the role of the researcher is to construct reality through the interpretation of the experiences and perceptions of individuals. The research currently being undertaken builds on a nominalist foundation and eschews the notion of a singular 'correct' form of self-evaluation or WSE. Instead the study seeks to investigate and analyse the experiences and perceptions of the participants, and to construct from that process a new reality in relation to evaluation in the school based on their inputs.

3.2.2 The epistemological dimension

Epistemology is concerned with the nature and scope of knowledge. It questions what knowledge is and the extent to which knowledge pertinent to any given subject or entity can be acquired (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2004). It attempts to answer the basic question of what distinguishes true knowledge from false knowledge or beliefs. The early theories of

knowledge stressed its absolute, permanent character- we either knew something or we did not. It was the responsibility of the researcher to access this knowledge. More recent definitions have moved from a static, passive view of knowledge, towards a more adaptive and active one - with the role of the researcher being to unveil knowledge as it happens. This latter understanding of knowledge as being flexible and adaptive has relevance for this research. The researcher comes to the research with no pre-conceived idea of what form the self-evaluation process will take, and an attempt is made to capture knowledge relating to the subject as it unfolds during the research. Neither has he any idea of what WSE in the school will entail and will rely on the perceptions of others to construct new insights into the process.

There are many different paradigms encountered in the literature and certain ambivalence exists in relation to what constitutes a paradigm. Flick (2009) attempts to bring some order to the topic by describing four categories of paradigms, though he admits that his categorisation is by no means definitive.

Table 3.1 displays four of the major paradigms, together with a list of the variety of terms used to describe each.

Table 3.1 Labels Commonly Associated With Different Paradigms			
Post positivist	Constructivist	Transformative	Pragmatic
Quantitative Experimental Quasi-experimental Co-relational Causal comparative Randomized control trials	Qualitative Naturalistic Interpretative Phenomenological Hermeneutic Symbolic interaction Ethnographic Participatory action research	Action research Critical theory Neo-Marxist Feminist theories Critical race theory Freirean Participatory Emancipatory Postcolonial/ Indigenous Queer theory Disability theories	Mixed methods Mixed models Participatory

(Adapted from Flick 2009, p.8)

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2004) suggest that, notwithstanding a researcher's need to understand his/her own world view, it is not necessary to operate within a single paradigm or to conduct paradigm-driven research. The next section describes the four main paradigms and assesses their influence on this research.

3.2.3 Post-Positivism

The dominant paradigms that guided early educational and psychological research were positivism and its successor post-positivism. Positivists draw on the assumptions of realism. The positivist perspective is one that views knowledge as being tangible and objective. Positivists examine the evidence available and make firm conclusions based on that evidence, continually mindful that 'great precision is necessary on the part of the scientist to verify conclusions reached' (Emden and Sandelowski 1999, p.2). Positivists made claims that 'scientific knowledge is utterly objective and that only scientific knowledge is valid, certain and accurate' (Crotty 1998, p.29).

Post-positivist psychologists came to reject the positivists' narrow perspective limiting what could be studied to what was observable. They also questioned the ability of researchers to establish laws that could be extrapolated to human behaviour. Post-positivists still hold beliefs about the importance of objectivity, but they recommend that 'researchers modify their claims to understandings of truth based on probability, rather than certainty' (Flick 2009, p.12). This led to the emergence of research methods which measured phenomena that previously were considered by the positivists to be too subjective. The decision to use a survey questionnaire to assess the empowerment levels of the teachers in the school in this research, for instance, is influenced by the post-positivist paradigm.

3.2.4 Constructivism

Constructivism is rooted in the nominalist philosophy. The basic assumptions underpinning the constructivist paradigm are that knowledge is socially constructed by those active in the research process. They believe that social reality is subjective, a product of individual consciousness. The basic ontological assumption of constructivism is relativism, that is, that people organise experiences in order to make them understandable and explainable, and is independent of any foundational reality

(Egon, Guba and Lincoln,2001). The basic methodological assumption of constructivism is hermeneutic-dialecticism. This is a process by which constructions entertained by the individuals involved are first uncovered and plumbed for meaning and then confronted, compared, and contrasted in encounter situations. Schwandt, (2000) asserts that researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. Constructivists seek to understand how ‘the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2004, p.7).

This research operates predominantly within the constructivist paradigm. Interpretative methods were used to gather evidence- such as participant observation, interviewing and personal constructs- to gain an understanding of how the reality of self-evaluation and WSE evolve. The perceptions and beliefs of the stakeholders were analysed and interpreted, and the participants’ input was used to develop a model of self-evaluation that was appropriate to their situation.

In both post-positivist and constructivist approaches, the researcher remains external to and independent of the research setting, and the participants are the objects of research. This is problematic for this study, as the researcher will be immersed in the self-evaluation process and was a subject in the WSE. However, a trend has emerged towards a more democratic and critical approach wherein the researchers and participants collaborate in the research process to transform the lives of the individuals involved.

3.2.5 Transformative Paradigm

The transformative paradigm was established as a response to the inadequacy of positivism and constructivism to address social justice issues such as suppression, inequality and alienation. Creswell (2003) stated that transformative researchers with political agendas used inquiry as a means of initiating reform in order to ‘change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live and the researcher’s life’ (p.9-10). Thus, transformative researchers consciously and explicitly position themselves side by side with the less powerful in a joint effort to bring about social transformation (Flick, 2009). Within the range of transformative paradigms the most relevant to this research is critical theory.

3.2.6 Critical theory

While positivism sets out to explain social phenomena, and constructivism and interpretivism seek to understand them, critical theory processes go beyond explanation and understanding to actually change the situation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2010). A number of features inform critical social science. Firstly, critical social scientists believe that it is necessary to understand the lived experience of real people in context in order to change and improve it. Secondly, critical approaches examine social conditions in order to uncover hidden structures. Understanding the structures that limit a person enables that person to take action against oppressive forces. Thirdly, critical social science makes a conscious attempt to fuse theory and action. Critical theory interprets the acts and the symbols of society in order to understand the ways in which various social groups are oppressed.

Although the participants in the present research were not considered to be oppressed, the schools engaged in the research are DEIS school and, as such, many of the pupils and parents are from a disadvantaged background and are marginalised in society. An aim of the research is to give these people a 'voice' in relation to how the school is managed and to acquire an input from them regarding how the school can be improved.

A distinguishing feature of critical social research methodology is that the reflective researcher is positioned at the center of the research, where he or she becomes indistinguishable from the research (Robinson, 2011). By adopting a collaborative approach with the participants throughout the research process, the researcher facilitates the participants in finding a 'voice'. The inclusion of the participants in the research process leads to awareness raising and to group empowerment. An aim of the research is to provide a forum where teachers can collaborate and address issues relevant to their own teaching practice with a view to improving that practice.

3.2.7 Communities of practice

Many researchers now question the effectiveness of traditional research in improving teachers' practice and they look to approaches that improve practice from within. Joram (2007) asserts that the traditional researchers' distance from the classroom, and the complexity of the knowledge that they present, limit their usefulness to teachers. There

is increasing support among policymakers and educational researchers for school-based communities of practice who will engage in collaborative inquiry and reflection with a view to improving teaching and learning from within (Nelson, 2000; Rollie, 2007). In the late 1980s and early 1990s two researchers, Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, developed a model of situated learning where groups of people who shared a concern or a passion for something they did met and learned from one another. Lave and Wenger (1991) assert that 'learning is not the acquisition of knowledge by individuals but a process of social participation. The nature of the situation impacts significantly on the process' (p.37). Teacher communities of practice are grounded in the belief that teacher-driven reflections are key determinants of sustained improvement in teaching and learning. An intended outcome of this research is to create a teacher learning community in the school so that the improvements deriving from the collaboration among teachers can be sustained.

Many researchers believe that the choice of research design should be determined by factors other than a philosophical notion of reality or knowledge (Denscombe, 2008). This has led researchers to adopt what is now viewed as a paradigm in its own right-pragmatism.

3.2.8 Pragmatism

This study uses a research design operating within the pragmatic paradigm, as the researcher is at one with those scholars who believe that any philosophy that limits the research design should be rejected. Morgan (2007) argues that researchers who chose to operate within one paradigm inherently rejected the principles that guided researchers who operated within other paradigms, thus rejecting all the positive aspects of those approaches. The pragmatic approach focuses on the research problem and uses whatever methods are necessary to understand and solve the problem. Morgan (2007) asserts that a pragmatic approach places its emphasis on shared meanings and joint action or 'to what extent are two people satisfied that they understand each other, and to what extent can they demonstrate the success of that shared meaning by working together on common projects?' (p.67). Feilzer (2009) asserts that pragmatism 'sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality and orients itself towards solving practical problems in the real world' (p.8). The adopting of a pragmatic approach by this researcher ensures that his natural preference for constructivism does not preclude the

use of methodologies favoured by proponents of the post-positivist paradigm, such as questionnaires.

3.3 Methodologies

This research uses methodologies from a number of paradigms such as quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods.

3.3.1 Quantitative Methodology

Quantitative approaches to research are rooted in the positivist paradigm and they dominated early social sciences research. Creswell (2009) describes quantitative research as ‘a means of testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures’ (p.4). The quantitative approach involves testing theories deductively, building in safeguards against bias, controlling for alternative explanations, and being able to generalize and replicate the findings. Maykut and Morhouse (1994) assert that an ‘insistence on explanation, prediction and proof are the hallmarks of positivism.’

Quantitative approaches are based on a number of assumptions. Firstly, they assume that regularities or patterns in nature exist and that these patterns can be observed and described. Secondly, dividing them into parts and studying those parts using empirical methods can test statements based on these regularities. Thirdly, they assume that it is possible to distinguish between value-laden statements and factual ones (Moses and Knutsen, 2007). Critics of this approach strenuously challenge most or all of these assumptions. They believe that there are very few absolute ‘facts’ in social science and contend that, even if the world exists independently of the observer, our knowledge of it does not. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2004) argue that life cannot be defined solely in measurable terms and that the quest for objectivity alienates us from ourselves and from nature. These critics advocate a more qualitative approach to research in social science.

3.3.2 Qualitative Methodology

Although qualitative research has been in existence for as long as quantitative research, one of the biggest shifts within social science research has been the former's more widespread acceptance as a research approach. Campbell (1997) defines qualitative research as:

An inquiry process based on building a holistic, complex understanding of a social problem. It is characterized by data collection in a natural setting where the researcher acts as a key instrument. Furthermore, the research contains deep, rich description and is more concerned with process than specifying outcomes or products. (p.122)

Qualitative researchers are interested in perceptions of reality and are open to the possibility that people may observe the same thing differently. Qualitative researchers view events through the prism of the people being studied ; this is normally achieved through face-to-face interaction. Unlike quantitative researchers, who adopt a prescriptive approach to gathering data, qualitative researchers value flexibility and are careful not to allow preconceived notions about the direction of the research to contaminate the findings. These researchers put a strong emphasis on process, described as 'a sequence of individual and collective events, actions, and activities unfolding over time in context' (Pettigrew 1997, p.338). Bryman (2004) recommends keeping structure to a minimum in order to enhance the opportunity for genuinely revealing the perspectives of the participants in the study. This flexibility of approach and lack of structure leaves qualitative methodology open to criticism. Critics of the approach claim that it is too subjective, is difficult to replicate, and that it lacks transparency (Bryman, 2004). The issue of subjectivity arises from the close relationship that qualitative researchers develop with participants and the often value-laden motivations of researchers.

Patton (1990) asserts that the key focus should be on the research problem and that the researcher should use whatever methods are necessary to understand and address the central issue. This research uses a mixed method approach to gathering information.

3.4 Mixed Methods

Mixed methods research attempts to respect the multiple beliefs, perspectives and usefulness of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, incorporating the best of both worldviews (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Creswell (2008) advances a number of strengths of mixed method research, strengths which render the approach appropriate for this study. Firstly, quantitative and qualitative data together provide a better understanding of the research problem than either type by itself; secondly, one type of research is not enough to answer the research question; and thirdly, from a practical perspective multiple viewpoints are needed. Another aspect of mixed method that is appealing is that one method can develop, inform and complement the other, and thereby mitigate the limitations associated with the primary method. Mixed methods provide greater breadth and depth, which facilitate enhanced description and deeper understanding (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007). Mason (2006) asserts that the fusion of quantitative and qualitative ideas can create data and arguments that can form the basis for well-founded social theory.

Creswell et al., (2011) identified six separate mixed method research approaches. These include the convergence parallel design, the explanatory sequential design, the exploratory sequential design, the embedded design, the transformative design and the multiphase design. The choice of the convergence parallel design for this research will now be justified.

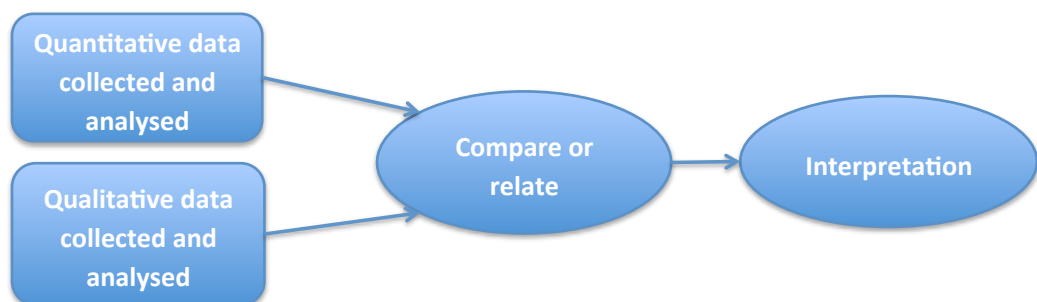
3.4.1 Rationale for use of convergence parallel design

All the models were assessed and considered for their suitability; each model held some appeal but all others were rejected in favour of the convergence parallel design. The explanatory sequential design occurs in two distinct interactive phases. This design starts with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, and is followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The priority is given to the quantitative method and thus was deemed unsuitable for this study which draws on the constructivist paradigm predominately. In contrast to the explanatory sequential design, the sequential exploratory design begins with the collection and analysis of qualitative data. Building

on these results, the researcher gathers quantitative data to test the findings and thus facilitate generalisation. This study seeks to interpret and understand the impact of evaluation in the school and is not concerned with generalisation. The objection to embedded design was its complexity and its focus on testing and experimentation; the transformative design was rejected as it operates within the context of the transformative framework, frequently associated with marginalised groups and individuals. The multiphase design was rejected for its complexity and the fact that it is normally used in longitudinal studies.

Ultimately, the researcher decided on the convergent parallel design, which gathers the quantitative and qualitative data in the same phase of the research process. The findings are analysed separately, and only at the interpretation stage is the data compared (see Figure 3.2). This is a simple and straight forward approach which takes into consideration the limited time scale of the research (Creswell, 2011). This model is chosen because the goal of the method is to compare data from two independent sources. The expectation is that the results of the questionnaires will contribute something separate and new to what was gleaned from the interviews and focus groups. The results from the survey did not influence the interviews, nor did the findings from the interviews influence the questions asked in the survey. The use of this model allows for the triangulation of results.

Figure 3.2 Convergence Parallel Mixed Method Design



(Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L., 2011)

3.5 Triangulation

Triangulation is defined as ‘the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon’ (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner 2007, p.114). It refers to the use of two or more independent sources of data, or data collection method, within one study to help ensure data validity. The purpose of using this approach is to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic (Morse 1991, p.122). One method can develop, inform and complement the other method, thereby minimising the limitations associated with the primary method (Creswell, 2002).

Triangulation can take place ‘within methods’ which is the use of a number of methods from the same methodology, or ‘between methods’, i.e. quantitative and qualitative methods. The use of ‘between-methods’ is preferred as it contributes to a more robust study (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner 2007, p.114). This research uses both ‘within’ and ‘between’ methods of triangulation. Such an approach facilitated the collection of both quantitative and qualitative evaluation data, the separate analysis of data and the final comparison and interpretation of results. Creswell (2003) advocates this model for its simplicity and flexibility and for mitigating the constraints of the researcher ,viz. time, resources and access.

The next section outlines some of the methods used in this research, including questionnaires, interviews and a focus group.

3.6 Questionnaires

A survey questionnaire was used to assess the impact of the SSE process and WSE process on the empowerment levels of the teachers before and after the implementation of self-evaluation. The purpose of the survey is to ascertain if self-evaluation impacted on the empowerment of teachers as had been indicated in the literature review. Babbie (2010) defines a questionnaire as ‘an instrument specifically designed to elicit information that will be useful for analysis’ (p.255). In general terms, a questionnaire is a data-collection technique in which each subject is asked to respond to the same set of questions in a predetermined order. Questionnaires are the most widely used quantitative instrument and are likely to be more reliable because they are anonymous and therefore encourage honest responses. Denscombe (2007) asserts that

questionnaires are a useful method of data collection when there are a large number of participants involved and when there is a need for standardised data

Respondents' beliefs, perceptions and attitudes on a subject such as self-evaluation and the empowerment of teachers are difficult to measure. Ordinal data include items such as rating scales and Likert scales, and these are frequently used in asking for opinions and attitudes (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007, p.502). The questionnaire in this research uses a ten-point Likert scale. This scale allows respondents to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement (Babbie, 2010). Structured questionnaires generate frequencies of response amenable to statistical treatment and analysis (Cohen et al., 2004). This is important in a situation such as the current research where measurement of empowerment levels is sought and changes in the levels are monitored.

The questionnaire distributed was a widely used questionnaire developed by an empowerment consultancy firm *AP Partners* (see Appendix A). This company is a well-established international management-training firm with offices in Dublin and France. They deliver Empowerment training to national and multi-national companies such as Servier, Irish Life, Aon, Transroute, Barclay Banks, Safran, Veolia, UbiFrance to name but a few. The researcher, in conjunction with the Managing Director of the company, developed the questionnaire for his Masters dissertation in DCU in 2008. The questions draw from the work of seminal researchers such as Spreitzer (1995a); (1995b); and (1997) and Boudrias, Savoie, and Gaudreau, (2009). A comparative factor analysis test on over one thousand completed empowerment questionnaires was carried out in multiple settings, to test the reliability of the survey instrument (Blunch, 2008). The main applications of factor analysis techniques are in the reduction of the number of variables and in the detecting of structure in the relationships between variables- in other words to classify these variables (Blunch, 2008). In this research, the questionnaire was administered to classify variables of empowerment. The most significant factor highlighted had the characteristics of psychological empowerment (PE). The other factors that emerged from the analysis were autonomy, team, and job satisfaction.

1. Psychological Empowerment

The questionnaire asked ten questions that measure PE. Seminal work by Spreitzer (1995a, b, 1997) helped define PE as a global mind-set including four cognitions reflecting a proactive orientation with regard to one's role in the organization. Empowered individuals find meaning in their work role, feel competent to perform their work role, have a feeling of self-determination with regard to specific means to achieve expected results, believe that they can have a real impact on organizational outcomes. Because psychologically empowered workers see themselves as competent and able to influence their jobs and work environments in a meaningful way, they are more likely to proactively execute their job responsibilities and to innovate in their job (Spreitzer, 1997).

2. Autonomy

Five questions relating to autonomy were asked. Autonomy is defined as 'the ability to influence one's own behaviour' (Vogt and Murrell, 1990). Heathfield (2008) sees empowerment as enabling or authorising an individual to think, behave, take action and control work and decision making in an autonomous way. Central to autonomy is the amount of control or direction a worker is given by his or her manager (Blanchard, Carlos and Randolph, 1999).

3. Team

Six questions were asked to measure how much the individuals feel part of a team in the school. Teams not only benefit the school; they can benefit the individual as well as they foster a sense of belonging and being part of something bigger than oneself (Lawrence and Nohria, 2002). Empowerment can be increased by the 'act of building, developing, and increasing power through co-operating, sharing, and working together' (Rothstein 1995, p.21). This connection gives the employee a sense of belonging and increases his or her job-satisfaction.

4. Job Satisfaction

The survey asked four questions to measure the amount of recognition and feedback the individuals feel that they receive from their manager. Feedback and recognition are recognised as being key factors in how motivated a person is towards his or her job

(Hertzberg, 1968). The results of the survey provided useful information on the impact of self-evaluation on the teaching staff in a school. A review of the findings provided a useful prompt for discussion on how the empowerment levels could be improved in the school. The results of the survey could be triangulated with the findings from the interviews and focus groups.

3.7 Interviews

Interviews were carried out with key participants in the research. An interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people (Yin, 2009). The aim is to gain the in-depth insights of the participants into the self-evaluation process and its impact on the staff in the school. It is an effective method of learning about, and understanding, the experiences, feelings and views of the participants (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). The greater depth allows the researcher to uncover unanticipated ideas or information (Britten, 1995).

Interviews may be structured, unstructured or semi-structured. This research used semi-structured interviews because they facilitate focussed questioning, but also allow a degree of flexibility for the interviewee to develop unique, personal responses about the research question. Semi-structured interviews allow a large amount of rich information, including non-verbal responses, to be obtained on the question of teachers perception on the SSE and the WSE (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). While a schedule of questions was prepared to ensure that the same topics were discussed by each interviewee (Appendix B), the researcher was free to probe and explore further themes raised by the interviewees about the impact of evaluation on the teachers. Having a prepared set of questions helps to ensure that the interviewees stay focused on the topic and the semi-structured nature allowed the interviewee to raise unexpected issues.

There are mixed views in relation to whether interviews should be recorded or not. Patton (1990) asserts that a recording device is 'indispensable' (p.348). Hoepfl (1997) argues that recording the interview frees the researcher to interact fully with the respondent and to build up a rapport. Recordings capture the data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes and can make it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview and the responses of the interviewee (p.53). They also allow the researcher to

play back the interview to discover nuances that might have been missed in the original interview. Although recording of the interview allows the researcher to revisit the interview numerous times, it may not necessarily reveal the totality of the experience, disconnected as it is from the context, time and place in interaction (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Other researchers, such as Lincoln and Guba (1985), object to recording interviews, except in exceptional circumstances, because of the intrusiveness of recording devices and the possibility of technical failure (p.241). This researcher recorded the interviews and found it intruded very little in the interview and was very useful to listen back over conversations and to read transcripts.

An important issue to consider when deciding to undertake interviewing is the level of expertise required by the researcher. Researchers must be skilled in asking open-ended questions and in eliciting responses from the interviewee. They must also avoid asking leading questions and looking for a pre-determined 'right' answer that would skew the research and undermine its validity. There is the potential for loss, distortion and reduction of the complexity of data from the commencement of the collection process to the report on the research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). It is also worth considering that interviewing can, especially in the transcribing phase, be time consuming for the researcher.

3.8 Focus groups

This researcher worked with one focus group to get the views of the SNA's in the school on the impact of the process on the staff in the school. Focus group research is described as 'a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher' (Morgan 1996; p130). Focus groups can be beneficial when working with groups of people who might be lower in the power hierarchy of an organisation, such as the SNA's who may be uncomfortable answering questions on their own. Morgan (1996) suggests that the group format provides members with the security and confidence to share information and encourages people to divulge in-group knowledge, and may draw out reluctant respondents. Focus groups are considered to be time efficient as they can produce a large amount of concentrated data in a short period of time (Whitney, 2005). Fallon and Brown (2002), however, suggest that they tend to yield less data than do one-to-one interviews involving the same number of participants.

A number of criticisms of focus groups are worth considering. Participants may feel themselves at risk discussing sensitive information in a group (Kaplowitz, 2000). It is difficult to assess the degree to which social dynamics- such as polarisation, conformity or censoring- influence the expression of opinions (Zorn et al., 2006). The inhibiting effect of participants knowing each other, and being in regular contact after participating in a focus group, is argued by some researchers as grounds for restricting honest disclosure, and by others for promoting candour and openness.

The role of the researcher in maximising participant involvement and promoting group interaction is important. This researcher attempted to remain as objective as possible and to achieve a judicious balance, allowing the discussion to flow and yet ensuring it remained on topic.

3.9 Case Study

This thesis will use a case study research design to investigate the topics of evaluation in the Research School. In particular it will be useful to gain a first-hand perspective on the impact of evaluation on the staff. Robson (2002) defines a case study as ‘a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence’. Creswell (2002) states that case study is ‘an in-depth exploration of a bounded system, for example an activity, event, process, or individuals, based on extensive data collection’ (p.485). Being bounded means that the case is ‘separated out for research in terms of time, place, or some physical boundaries’ (Creswell 2003, p.485). The boundary for this case study is the processes of SSE and WSE as they take place within the setting of a post-primary school.

3.9.1 Rationale for the use of Case Study

There are cogent grounds for adopting an in-depth case-study research approach when attempting to understand complex interventions such as SSE and WSE and the impact they may have on a teaching staff. Yin (2009) identifies three applications of case study that suggest it is an appropriate research design for this study. Firstly, case study can be

used to describe an intervention such as SSE and WSE in the real life context in which they occur; secondly, it can be used to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies; and thirdly, it can be used to enlighten those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear single set of outcomes, as is the case with self-evaluation.

Case study is useful in narrating people's lived experiences, thoughts and feelings in a specific context and situation. It is concerned with understanding and interpreting a situation or processes such as SSE and WSE through the eyes of the participants (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). It helps to examine the threads of their experiences and to decipher which of these experiences are common and which are unique (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This approach is especially appropriate when the boundaries between the phenomenon being studied and the context within which it is being studied are not evident. Yin (2009) asserts that the case study method can be used when it is believed that contextual conditions are pertinent to the phenomenon of study, as is the case in this study. Flyvbjerg (2006) notes that an advantage of the case study is that it can focus on events as they occur and it is possible to 'test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice' (p.235).

Case study can be particularly useful for studying a complex process such as evaluation in a holistic way. The use of multiple sources and techniques for data gathering allows for alternative interpretations of the evidence (Soy, 1997). Different strategies such as experimental research would allow answers to a limited number of pre-arranged questions to be answered and a snapshot in time to be taken. In a study of SSE and WSE, the questions themselves emerge only as the process unfolds. Yin (2009) asserts that case study is the preferred method when exploratory questions such as 'Why?' 'What?' 'Who?' and 'How?' are being posed. Another significant strength of a case study is the presentation of the research in an accessible form, making it easily understood and immediately intelligible. This is an important consideration given the amount and complexity of the data being gathered, compared to traditional research.

Traditional research uses mainly deductive reasoning wherein hypotheses are researched and tested. The aim of the research is often to prove or disprove a particular theory. Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts that trying to predict the outcomes in social science is difficult. 'Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs.

Concrete, context-dependent knowledge is therefore more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals' (p.7). When implementing an initiative such as school self-evaluation, for instance, it is difficult to have many preconceived ideas of the form that the outcome of this initiative will take. An advantage of a case study is that it allows an iterative approach to be taken, wherein outcomes that are appropriate to this situation emerge and problems specific to this context can be addressed by the participants, as they arise (Yin, 2009).

3.9.2 Criticisms of case study

There are a number of significant criticisms of the case study approach that should be acknowledged and addressed. The main criticisms relate to the potential for a perceived lack of rigour, the inability to generalise, bias and the role of the researcher.

3.9.3 Lack of Rigour

A widespread criticism of case study research is a perceived lack of rigour, whether in conducting the research, in analysing the data and/or in the evaluation of the results obtained. The lack of a prescriptive procedure for gathering and analysing data results in great difficulty in relation to replicating the study, and this calls into question the validity and rigour of the research process (Frideres, 1992). Conversely, Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts that case study has its own rigour, as it can 'close in' on real-life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice (p.19). The capacity of the research environment to ensure rigour is identified by some researchers. Geertz (1995) explains that 'The Field' itself is 'a powerful disciplinary force - assertive, demanding, and even coercive. Like any such force, it can be underestimated, but it cannot be evaded. It is too insistent for that' (p.119). Yin (2003) recommends the use of systematic procedures as a method of ensuring rigour. Walsham (1995) insists that the researcher should provide a detailed, coherent and systematic trail of evidence delineating how the case study results were arrived at.

3.9.4 Generalisability

Some critics contend that the study of a single or small number of cases limits the extent to which the findings are generalisable. They contend that a finding that applies to only one

situation cannot be reliably applied to other situations. Yin (2009) argues that stating that a case study cannot contribute to scientific knowledge because it is not generalisable rests on an assumption that generalisability is the only way to contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge. This notion is based on the contentious assumption that scientific knowledge is the only type of knowledge that has a value. Flyvbjerg (2006) contends that ‘one can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalisation as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalisation is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas “the force of example” is underestimated’ (p.12).

3.9.5 Bias

Critics of case study suggest that case study has a bias toward verification, or in other words, a tendency to confirm the researcher’s preconceived notions. Diamond (1996) is critical that case study does not apply scientific methods to curb the tendency ‘to stamp one’s pre-existing interpretations on data as they accumulate’ (in Flyvbjerg 2009, p.18). While it is generally accepted that bias towards verification affects all research, the alleged deficiency of case study is that it allows more scope for the researcher’s subjective judgement than do other methods. However, Flyvbjerg (2006) asserts that ‘case study contains no greater bias toward verification of the researcher’s preconceived notions than other methods of inquiry’ (p.21). In fact, experience indicates that the case study contains a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification as case study provides deeper insights into a phenomenon which may dispel pre-existing notions that the researcher may have held. Yin (2003) suggests that a carefully planned research design, allied to self-awareness on the part of the researcher, can minimise that potential for bias.

3.9.6 The insider researcher

When carrying out any research it is important to establish where the researcher is positioned in the research. Herr and Anderson (2005, p.30) emphasise that acknowledging one’s position is important for a researcher as it ‘will determine how they frame epistemological, methodological and ethical issues.’ This research was conducted in the researcher’s own school and the participants were all colleagues and

friends. The term used to describe the situation where the researcher has a direct involvement or connection with the research setting is 'insider research' (Robson, 2002). Such research has been contrasted with traditional notions of scientifically rigorous research in which the researcher is an 'objective outsider' studying subjects external to his/herself (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

The insider researcher adopts multiple positions which can cause tensions and conflicting allegiances; the negotiation of sometimes delicate and fraught situations requires great consideration and reflection on the part of the researcher. For instance, in this study the researcher is a teacher in the school; he is a colleague to all the other participants; he is charged with implementing the SSE programme in the school and he is carrying out research on the process as part of his doctoral studies. Positivists, considering these circumstances, would question the objectivity of the researcher and would challenge the validity of his findings (Kvale, 1995). In this study, the researcher is aware of the potential bias that may attach to conducting a research project which he has a vested interest in promoting positively. His concern for the programme's success may prompt him to probe for, and give undue weighting to, information that is supportive of the thesis and gloss over or minimise data and information that undermines or is critical of his focus. The researcher took great care in questioning his own assumptions and underlying values throughout the research, in order to minimise bias. He continually emphasised the need for participants to give honest opinions and that a negative finding was as valuable to the research as a positive one.

One of the key advantages of being an 'insider' is that the researcher has tacit knowledge and a unique perspective of the research environment, something to which the outsider is not privy (Jones quoted in Tedlock, 2000). Working in close proximity to teachers on a daily basis allows the researcher to draw on his implicit knowledge of the work place to design and manage the study. Being an insider may make it easier to conduct the study in a number of ways. For instance, in this study, there was a high level of collegiality among participating teachers, sharing as they did common experiences and working towards improving the school. The rapport that is essential to carry out social research was already established between the participants and the researcher. Likewise, the interviews were conducted in a relaxed manner. It is argued that interviewees may feel more comfortable and freer to talk openly if familiar with the researcher (Tierney, 1994). It could be argued that insider research has the

potential to increase validity, due to the added richness, honesty, fidelity and authenticity of the information acquired.

However, insider research does not, per se, guarantee access to hidden information or the formation of trust (Labaree, 2002). In this study, for example, some staff members who may have had important insights into the improvement process did not wish to participate in the research as they did not feel comfortable sharing information with a colleague. The researcher is also confronted with the ethical implications of sharing insider knowledge with a wider audience; after all insider knowledge is privileged information. The fact that the researcher intended to publish a doctoral thesis may have affected the readiness of the participants to provide honest views on the process.

Anti-positivists maintain that arguments against insider research are applicable to all research. One can never guarantee the honesty and openness of subjects, and research is always coloured by subjectivities; total objectivity is impossible to attain. Hammersley (2000) asserts that the task is to minimise the impact of biases on the research process by carrying out the research in consciousness of its socially situated character and by making transparent the researcher's position vis-à-vis the research process. By making the research process transparent and honest, it is argued that readers can construct their own perspectives which 'are equally as valid as our own' (Cohen et al. 2000, p.106). This researcher made every effort to adhere to these principles, and ensured that the participants were reassured that there would be no negative impacts from their participation in this study.

3.10 The Case Study Process

A detailed account of the steps and timelines for the research are provided in figure 3.3 below. The feedback from participants in the pilot study led to a number of changes being made to the SSE process for the research school. The key changes were:

- Discontinue with the ice-breakers as people felt uncomfortable doing them and they had little relevance to the theme of the workshop.
- Give a shorter introduction at the start as people want to get started more quickly.

- Keep the activities and discussion on the mission, vision and stakeholders needs.
- The SWOT analysis was good to generate a discussion on the strengths and weaknesses of the school but fostered a shallow analysis of how the school was performing. There is a need to develop a more comprehensive tool to evaluate the processes in the school. –allow people to gather data on each subject if necessary.
- Give the analysis stage more time. The analysis does not have to be completed in the first workshop.
- Need to try and get a full day for the initial workshop as the flow between the activities was hampered by the breakup of the workshop into three half days. This would ultimately save time as the three half day workshops could be done in one full day.
- There is a need to be very specific about what is expected of the groups when they work together. Some training in how the group could regulate themselves might be appropriate.
- The process needs to be monitored and reviewed much more closely. Definite parameters need to be given as to what is expected for each review meeting
- Each group needs to gather much more data on their subject as they need to be able to monitor success.
- A survey questionnaire should be used to get quantitative data on the impact of the process on the staff. The survey would reveal valuable information on any changes in the attitude, beliefs and behaviours of the staff as a result of the SSE process.

Figure 3.3: Details of the research schedule for Pilot School

Case Study Project: Pilot school		
Dates	Steps taken	Method
13/ Dec/ 2011	Preparation for pilot study	Meeting with Principal. Discussed and agreed proposal. Secured agreement from BOM. Reviewed <i>LAOS</i> document
26/ Jan/ 2012	Workshop #1 Pilot Evaluate the school	Half day workshop with teachers in the pilot school to evaluate current situation in the school
2/ Feb/ 2012	Workshop #2 Pilot Visioning and Strategy	Half day workshop with teachers in the pilot school to create vision and develop strategies
9/ Feb/ 2012	Workshop #3 Developing action plan	Half day workshop with teachers in pilot school to establish project teams and develop action plans
Feb-June 2012	Action and review	Teams worked on their projects within the framework of the Croke Park Agreement.
27/ April/ 2012	Review meeting	Review meeting with project leaders to assess progress and deal with issues that had arisen.
15/ June/ 2012	End of year review meeting	End of year meeting to review outcomes of work projects. Review status of each project.
27/ June/ 2012	Evaluate the process	Interviews with the principal, deputy principal and four staff members..

The research carried out in the research school commenced once the research in the pilot school was concluded. The SSE process was carried out over two years but only the first year was included in the research. The first year aims to embed the SSE in the overall mission and direction of the school. The principles of an effective SSE process highlighted in the literature review are adhered to as far as is practicable. The aim is to make the process an inclusive, collaborative, reflective process as suggested by the DES (2012). All the teachers in the school are included in the process, as well as the SNAs. The parents are also consulted about their views and the students' council are asked for their input.

The process adopts a partnership approach with staff members working together in groups. Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) assert that participation levels should be ‘appropriate’ therefore care is taken to ensure that everyone contributes , but no one bears too much of the burden. The process is integrated into the overall direction of the school (Vanhoof and Van Petegem, 2012) and a clear vision of success for the school is created (Coghlan and Brannick, 2008). Opportunities for leaders to develop during the process are provided, according as people are required to lead projects, come up with creative ideas and take the initiative (Harris, 2004). Every attempt is made to make this a learning experience for the staff ; reflection and discussion are encouraged.

Figure 3.4 Details of the schedule in the research school

Case Study Project: Research school		
Phase One: May 2012-May 2013		
Embed the SSE project in the overall strategic direction of the school		
Date	Steps taken	Method
25/ May/ 2012	Preparation for research in research school	Meeting with principal in the Research school to discuss need for self-evaluation process in school. Discuss <i>LAOS</i> document and DES Guidelines. Principal secured permission from BOM to allow research to take place in the school.
26/ Aug/ 2012	Second meeting with principal	Meeting with principal to agree proposal and to set timetable for the process.
10/ Sept/ 2012	Workshop #1 Evaluate the school Visioning Strategy development	Full day workshop with the teaching staff and the SNAs to analyse the current situation in the school, create a vision of success for the project and to develop strategies. Empowerment survey completed
1/ Oct/ 2012	Workshop #2 Planning action	Half day workshop to set up project teams, develop objectives and devise action plans for each team.
Oct 2012- Dec 2013	Action	Teams worked on the projects within the time frame allowed by the Croke Park Agreement.

15/ Oct/ 2012	Analysis Exam results	Staff meeting reviewed Junior Certificate results. Analysis of the results for each subject undertaken.
6/ Nov/ 2012	Parents meeting #1	Meeting with Parents' Council. Reviewed material produced in workshops by teaching staff; used as the basis for discussion on how school could be improved.
13/ Nov/ 2012	Parents' meeting #2	Parents met on their own to make a more considered contribution to the process
10/ Dec/ 2012	Parents meeting #3	Parents met researcher and gave input on how the school could be improved.
10/Dec/ 2012	Students council meeting	Meeting with students' council. Received feedback on report and got ideas for improvement
10/ Dec/ 2012	First review meeting	Staff meeting to review progress, extrapolate learning points and plan actions for stage of the process Feedback from parents' council was presented to staff.
Dec 2012- March 2013	Action	Teams work on projects.
25/ Mar/ 2013	Second review meeting	Staff meeting to review progress of the project teams, extrapolate learning points and plan actions for next cycle.
9/ May/ 2013	WSE inspection	Department inspectors carried out a WSE in the school.
17/ May/ 2013	Review meeting Conclusion of process	Each project team gave an end of year progress report on their project, detailing what tasks were completed and what remained to be implemented. The empowerment survey was re-administered.
27-31 /May/2013	Evaluation of process	The principal, deputy principal and 22 staff members were interviewed for their views of the process. Facilitated one focus group with four SNAs. Interviewed one SNA

The next section will explain the process adopted and will give the rationale for the inclusion of each step.

3.11 Steps of the process

The first step of the process entailed a broad evaluation of the school where the staff evaluated many areas and issues. The first step in the process involved all the teachers and the SNA taking part in a workshop and analysing the current situation in the school. In light of the findings from the pilot study a questionnaire was administered to all the participants in the research school to study variables of empowerment. The characteristics of psychological empowerment, autonomy, team and job satisfaction were surveyed.

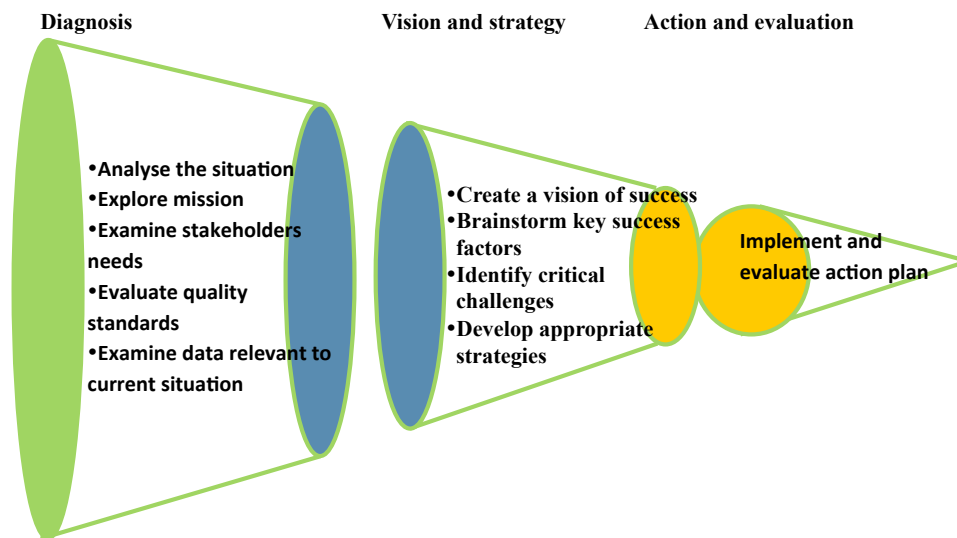
3.11.1 The workshops

A series of workshops was organized to introduce the self-evaluation process. A research tool called the *Solution Cone* (figure 3.4) was used to guide the process. This closely relates to the three-step evaluation procedure identified by Fetterman (1996) in his Empowerment Evaluation process.

The tool provides the process with a structure, and simultaneously allows the flexibility to adapt to any changes in the situation.

As can be seen from figure 3.4 the largest wedge of the cone represents the diagnostic stage, or the ‘taking stock’ stage in Fetterman’s model, underpinning the pivotal role of analysis, which should be as broad and comprehensive as possible. The next stage sees the staff creating a vision of success for the school and developing strategies to realise this vision. This corresponds to Fetterman’s ‘goal setting’ stage. This stage is deemed crucial by many researchers as it helps embed the SSE process in the broad context of the school. The smallest section of the cone, representing the need to be very targeted, practical and focused on implementing the strategies, represents the action stage of the process.

Figure 3.5: The Solution Cone



(Stacke and Cosson, 2006)

3.11.2 Stage 1: Diagnosis

The diagnosis stage included an evaluation of the mission of the school and its relevance. It also included an evaluation of the needs of the different stakeholders and how well these needs are being met. In the pilot study a simple SWOT analysis was carried out to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the school. The feedback was that this was useful, but the depth of analysis was limited. The staff did seem to have difficulty looking beyond their own perspective and the ‘organisational blindness’ highlighted by MacBeath & Myers (2002) may have featured. In response to this, an evaluation tool was developed by the researcher to help achieve a more in-depth analysis of the quality of educational provision in the school based on best practice (Appendix D). The tool provided quality standard statements and associated criteria that the staff was encouraged to use to evaluate the school. The tool was based on the idea of quality statements and criteria highlighted in the LAOS document, although the format ultimately adopted is simpler and the complex issue of addressing *Areas, Aspects, Components* and *Themes* was avoided. The tool was adapted from a similar tool devised by O’Brien (2005) for Youthreach. Criteria gathered from various sources including a document produced by Bracknell Forest Education

Department Curriculum Quality and Achievement Branch (1999) entitled *Criteria for School Evaluation and Development* was used to develop the criteria.

This stage was a collaborative venture with participants working in groups to assess each quality area, and stating whether the criteria were: *In Place; Needs Further Work; Not yet in Place; or Don't Know*. Some quantitative data was gathered, but the most important aspect of the exercise was the discussion on the quality of education being provided in the school. Each group generated qualitative data and the inputs from the groups were discussed in a plenary session. A summary of the finding from these discussions is presented in the report on the workshop (Appendix E).

Ten quality areas were evaluated using the tool:

1. Learning (attainment and progress)
2. Discipline (attitude, behavior and personal development)
3. Teaching (the quality of educational provision)
4. Assessment (fairness of the assessment process)
5. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
6. Guidance
7. Partnerships (parental and community involvement)
8. Leadership and management
9. Staffing (resources and development)
10. Resources

3.11.3 Stage 2: Vision and strategy

Visioning is a planning function looking to the future (Torbert, 2006). It is the process of articulating and imagining what the school will be like after the change has taken place. Beckhard and Harris (1992) assert the critical importance of visioning is that it describes the desired future in a positive light, which provides the focus and energy essential to the process. Coughlan and Brannick (2008) suggest that working on a desired future is an important way of harnessing the political elements within the system and of building a consensus. Researchers such as Vanhoof and VanPetegem (2012) assert that creating a vision is important to situate the self-evaluation process in the broader context of school development.

The next step was to decide on the strategy that would achieve the desired vision for the future. Coghlan and Brannick (2008) assert that, because the present is being evaluated in light of the desired future there is a need to assess what needs changing and what does not. Having identified the key issues, priority is given to those that are critical. The strategy was developed by means of a brainstorming exercise, during which the participants identified the key success factors relating to how the school could be improved. The participants discussed and voted on the ones they felt were the most critical to the realisation of the vision. These critical challenges were then formulated into a number of broad strategies.

3.11.4 Stage 3: Action and evaluation

Once the strategies were agreed, project teams were established to develop action plans. An operational plan, that ‘defines the goals, activities, structures, projects and experiments that will help achieve the desired state’ (Coghlan and Brannick 2008, p.96), was designed. This is the stage where people committed to implementing the changes and took ownership of the process. Every team devised action plans and objectives, timescales and responsibilities were outlined (Appendix F).

The team members implemented the plans over a period. Some projects were quite modest in scope and were completed relatively quickly; others were more elaborate and complex in nature, and may require a number of years to complete. Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) assert that self-evaluation processes can sometimes overburden already stressed teachers; an attempt was made, therefore, to ensure that everyone was given responsibility for leading some part of the project but that no one person would be required to bear the brunt of full responsibility. The teams were advised that they should not to be restricted by the plan, but should be prepared to alter and adapt it as they saw fit, contingent on the objectives of the plan being met.

The process was reviewed intermittently during the year. The pilot study was evaluated after three month duration, and the information gathered was used to create the framework for the main self-evaluation process. The duration of the main work projects was a full academic year, but three review meetings were built into the process. After each work period, each team were asked to report to the other groups on their progress; issues that arose were discussed and the impact of the actions was reflected on.

3.13 Sampling

3.13.1 Questionnaire sample

Sampling is selecting a subset of the population and using it to study the population as a whole (Roche and Brannick, 1997). Underlying all sampling theory is the principle that a subset of the elements in a population can provide useful information which can be extrapolated to the entire population. Inferences can be drawn about the characteristics of the population, on the basis of this information. In quantitative research, probability sampling is the predominant sampling strategy. This strategy depends on the selection of a random and representative sample from the larger population; the purpose of the sampling is generalisation of the research findings to the main population. Alternatively, the sampling may be determined by other methods, involving some element of judgement. Methods of sampling that entail a degree of judgement are sometimes referred to as purposive selection, judgement selection, or non-probability selection.

In this study, a census of the teaching population was used in the distribution of the survey, whereby all the teachers were invited to complete the questionnaire. Respondents were drawn from a sampling frame of 40 teachers working in the school. They were informed that their participation in the research was voluntary. Out of a teaching staff of 40, a total of 35 teachers completed the survey in September 2012, and 39 completed it in May 2013. The discrepancy in numbers relate to absenteeism on the day of the workshop.

3.13.2 Interview sample

The qualitative method involved interviews with the management and staff members in the school. A number of different sampling strategies were used to select a sample for interviews. A positional sample was used as the principal and deputy-principal were invited to take part in the study by virtue of their positions in the school (Quinlan, 2011). They were selected as they were in leadership roles in the self-evaluation process and had unique insights into the implementation process. In the pilot school, a judgement sample was used to select the other teachers for interview. Judgement samples refer to situations where the researcher selects a group of what are perceived as

‘typical’ or ‘representative’ elements in the population, on the advice of experts in the field (Roche and Brannick, 1997). The teachers were selected by the principal, who was familiar with the teachers and knew who would have useful insights into the process. It is recognised that this opens the sample to the accusation of bias, but the honest responses from the interviewees gave no indication of bias in any particular direction.

In the main case study, the principal and deputy principal were interviewed and all teachers were invited to take part in an interview. 22 teachers from the 40 agreed to be interviewed, a response rate of just over 50 per cent. A profile of the interviewees is given in figure 3.6 below. The profile reflects, generally, the profile of the teachers in the school as a whole - in terms of gender and experience - and can, therefore, be said to be a representative sample. The objective was not to maximize numbers but to become ‘saturated’ with information on the topic (Padgett 1998, p.52), which was achieved.

The researcher was aware of the risk of bias in the interview sample for the Research School with the possibility that those who were positively disposed towards the process more likely to volunteer. The fact that over half the staff was interviewed should mean that the sample was large enough to provide a wide range of opinions. Additionally, the researcher asked two individuals who had not volunteered for interview to participate, as he felt they may not be as positive towards the process as others and would therefore provide balancing perspectives. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) assert that researchers can ‘handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement, of their typicality, or possession of the particular characteristics being sought’ (p.114).

Figure 3.6: Profile of interviewees

Profile	Number
Pilot project:	6
Male	3
Females	3
Experience:	
< 10 years	3
> 10years	3
Main project	22
Female	13
Male	9
Experience	
< 5 years	6
5-15 years	5
>15 years	11
SNA Focus group	4
Female	all female
Interview with an SNA	1 female
Experience	All have over 5 years experiences as SNAs
Total participants	33

3.14 Data analysis

Many different approaches to analysing qualitative data are identified in the literature. Many of these are associated with specific approaches or traditions, such as grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), phenomenology (van Manen, 1990), discourse

analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1994), and narrative analysis (Leiblich, 1998). The range and complexity of some to the approaches posed difficulties in relation to making a choice for this study. To assist in deciding on the most suitable approach, a comparison was made between the four main strategies used to analyse qualitative data: general inductive approach, grounded theory, discourse analysis, and phenomenology. The key points of the four commonly used strategies are compared in figure 3.7.

Figure 3.7: Comparison of Qualitative Analysis Approaches

	General Inductive Approach	Grounded Theory	Discourse Analysis	Phenomenology
Analytic strategies and questions	What are the core meanings evident in the text, relevant to evaluation or research objectives?	To generate or discover theory using open and axial coding and theoretical sampling	Concerned with talk and texts as social practices and their rhetorical or argumentative organization	Seeks to uncover the meaning that lives within experience and to convey felt understanding in words
Outcome of analysis	Themes or categories most relevant to research objectives identified	A theory that includes themes or categories	Multiple meanings of language and text identified and described	A description of lived experiences
Presentation of findings	Description of most important themes	Description of theory that includes core themes	Descriptive account of multiple meanings in text	A coherent story or narrative about the experience
From Thomas (2006) <i>A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data</i>				

The general inductive approach is very similar to grounded theory but does not explicitly separate the coding process into open coding and axial coding. Furthermore, researchers using the general inductive approach typically limit their theory building to the presentation and description of the most important categories, rendering it more straight forward. Discourse analysis typically provides a detailed account of the perspectives and rhetorical devices evident in a set of text. Phenomenology seeks to understand the lived experiences among people who have had a common experience and to write a coherent account of the meaning of those experiences (Thomas, 2006).

Ultimately, the researcher selected the “general inductive approach” as the most appropriate one to address the research question. Inductive analysis refers to an approach that primarily uses detailed readings and interpretations of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model (Thomas, 2006).

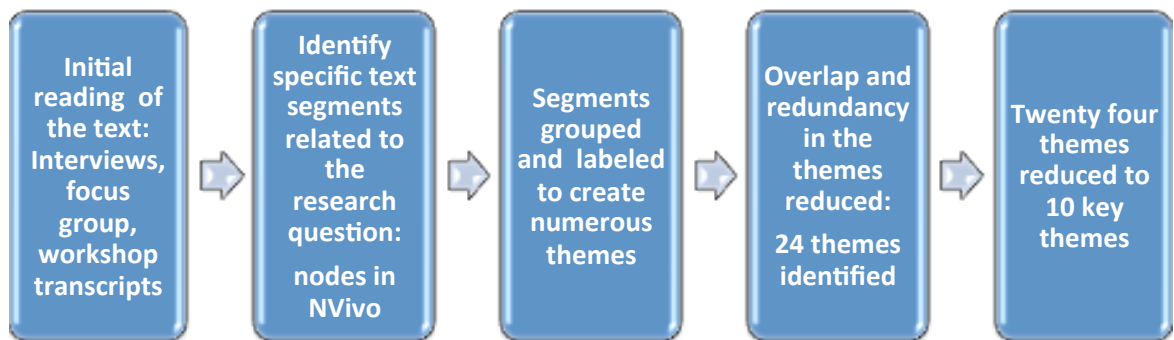
The adoption of this approach had consequences for the manner in which the researcher applied himself to the study.

1. The inductive approach allowed research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies. Scriven’s (1991, p.56) description of “goal-free” evaluation is consistent with an inductive approach whereby researchers wish to describe the *actual* program effects, not the planned effects. The identification of any significant unplanned or unanticipated effects arising from the SSE and WSE processes is an important aspect of this study.
2. The data analysis was guided by the evaluation objectives, which identified areas and topics to be investigated. The analysis was carried out through multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data, the inductive component. Although the findings were influenced by the evaluation objectives and questions outlined by the researcher, the findings arose directly from the analysis of the raw data, not from a priori expectations or models. The evaluation objectives provided a focus or domain of relevance for conducting the analysis, not a rigid set of expectations relating to specific findings.
3. The primary mode of analysis was the development of categories from the raw data and imposing a framework on them. This framework contained key themes and processes, identified and constructed by the researcher during the coding process.
4. The findings result from multiple interpretations of the raw data, coded by the researcher. Inevitably, the findings were shaped by the assumptions and experiences of the researcher. For the findings to be meaningful, the researcher was required to make decisions about what was important and what was less important in the data.

3.14.1 Analysis process

This section describes the process of analysis that took place in the study. Figure 3.8 presents the coding process, and how the data was reduced and interpreted.

Figure 3.8: The Coding Process in Inductive Analysis



Source: Adapted from Creswell (2002, p.266) in Thomas (2006).

The following procedures were adopted for the inductive analysis of the qualitative data, consistent with the approach recommended by Thomas (2006) above.

- *Preparation of raw data files:* The contents of the interviews and focus group were transcribed verbatim and arranged in a common format suitable for uploading to NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program. The audiotapes of the interviews and the workshop from the pilot school were transcribed first. Codes were used to identify each speaker to fulfil the undertaking regarding anonymity. The transcripts were placed in the program as internal sources. This allowed all the material from the interviews and the focus group to be readily accessible to the researcher. The full transcript of each interview can be viewed in the document-viewing pane of the NVivo screen.
- *Close reading of text:* the researcher transcribed all the voice recordings, which gave a good understanding of the themes that were appearing repeatedly in the interviews and focus group. Once text had been prepared, the raw text was read in detail until the researcher was familiar with its content.
- *Creation of categories:* The qualitative data was analysed using NVivo 10 and themes and categories were allowed to emerge. The interviews were coded or

formed into nodes (as referred to in the NVivo programme). Many authors refer to coding when analysing interview data (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Hoepfl, 1997; Mason, 2002). Coding involves taking segments of text and labelling those categories. The purpose of coding is ‘to acquire a new understanding of the phenomenon of interest; therefore causal events contributing to the phenomenon, descriptive details of the phenomenon itself, and the ramifications of the phenomenon under study must all be identified and explored’ (Hoepfl 1997, p.55). Coding allowed significant statements that appeared in the interviews to be identified and categorised. Nine pre-determined categories emanating from the research questions were adopted as the main categories with which units of meaning, or segments of interview data, were to be matched. Allowance was made for other categories in relation to segments of text that were not anticipated at the beginning (Cresswell, 2009).

These categories were:

- SSE and accountability
- SSE and development
- WSE and accountability
- WSE and development
- Internal evaluation
- External evaluation
- The SSE process
- The SSE workshop
- WSE process

Three other categories emerged from the interviews and focus group

- Leadership
- Empowerment and teamwork
- Relationships

These main categories were then analysed further and sub-nodes were identified. The lower-level, or specific, categories were derived from multiple readings of the raw data, sometimes referred to as in vivo coding (Thomas, 2006). The following sub-categories were identified:

The SSE process:

- focus of the evaluation
- positives of the SSE process
- negatives of the SSE process
- improvements to the SSE process
- impact of SSE process

The SSE workshop:

- mission
- stakeholders' needs
- evaluation tool
- vision
- brainstorming and strategy development
- the project groups
- the review process

The WSE process:

- WSE positives
- WSE negatives
- Improvements to WSE process
- Impact of WSE

This gave a total of 24 categories.

- *Overlapping coding and uncoded text:* According to Thomas (2006) there are two rules that distinguish qualitative coding from the rules typically used in quantitative coding: (a) one segment of text may be coded into more than one category, and (b) a considerable amount of the text may not be assigned to any category. This was evident in this study as many of the issues that arose appeared in numerous contexts. In addition,, much of the material from the interviews was not relevant to the research question.
- *Continuing revision and refinement of category system:* In order to process the large volume of data categorized under the research question headings, participants' responses were collated. This facilitated data reduction and provided a detailed description for the case study report as well as the

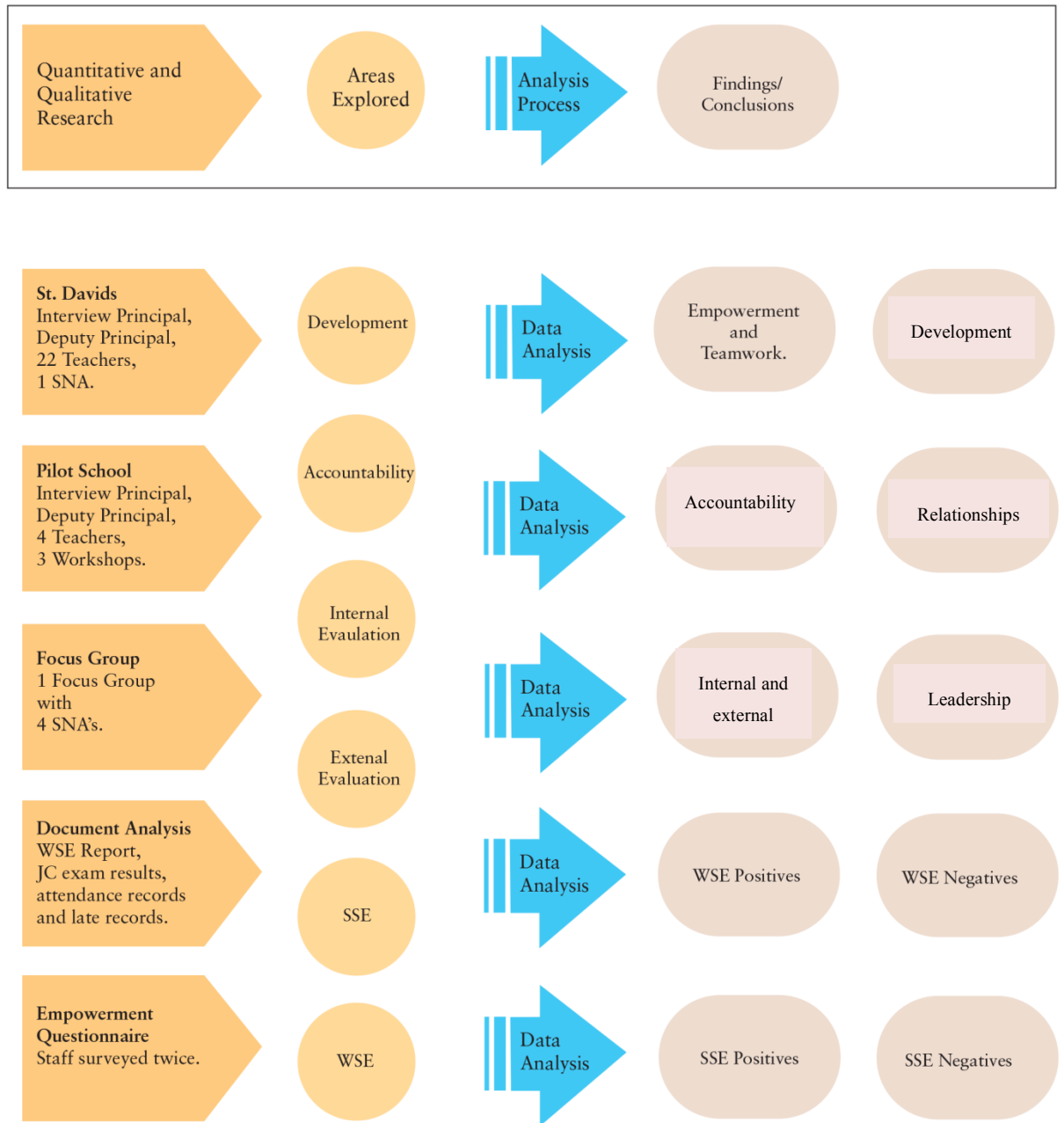
development of themes - supported by quotations and specific evidence - to aid data interpretation.

A total of 10 key themes emerged from the findings; these are enumerated below, and are interpreted and discussed in Chapter four.

1. Accountability
2. Development
3. Internal and external evaluation
4. Positives of the SSE process
5. Negatives of the SSE process
6. Positives of the WSE process
7. Negatives of the WSE process
8. Leadership
9. Empowerment and team
10. The culture of improvement

Figure 3.9 illustrates how the key themes that emerged from the findings were arrived at. Six key areas relating to the research question were explored; accountability, development, internal and external evaluation and the processes of WSE and SSE. The data was analysed by both qualitative and quantitative methods, and a total of twenty four themes were initially identified. These were then interpreted, combined and reduced to produce ten main themes that are analysed and discussed in Chapter Four. Conclusions were then drawn from this analysis and presented, along with recommendations in Chapter Five.

Figure 3.9: The research process described



3.14.2 Using NVivo to analyse qualitative data

The researcher's decision to use the qualitative data analysis program NVivo was stimulated by a workshop held in DCU. NVivo was judged to be an appropriate program to use as it allows large amounts of data to be managed efficiently. The basic concepts of the program such as links, nodes, memos, and attributes, were explained in

the workshop together with important functions such as coding, and searching. NVivo enabled the researcher to look at coded segments of the data in context so that it was possible to explore coded passages without separating them from the material before and after. This helped to speed up the data management and data analysis task.

Overall, NVivo added an element of rigor to the analysis process. It demonstrated very clearly all the data coded and the way it had been coded. The relationships explored by the researcher among the data sources could be seen easily in the two browsers of NVivo. Although rigorous in its analysis, the program did little to ensure validity of the research. According to Welsh (2002) the software 'is less useful in terms of addressing issues of validity and reliability in the thematic ideas that emerge during the data analysis process' (p.12). The factors that contributed to the credibility of the conclusions in this research study include : triangulation of data sources, extended experience in the environment, and researcher's audit of the research trail, these had nothing to do with NVivo software, and related more to the way this study was conducted by the researcher.

The use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software such as NVivo is contested by some researchers. There are two main areas of concern pertinent to this study – paradigm congruence and issues around how data is handled and analysed. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), all qualitative data analysis software programs are designed to be compatible with theory that "emerges" from out of the data. However, some critics such as Coffey et al., (1996) suggest that this is a superficial view, and they baulk at what appears to be a method of quantifying data which is at odds with the epistemological and philosophical underpinnings of that theory. To this researcher, NVivo is nothing more than a data management tool and as such there was no obvious incongruity between the theory and the use of software. The research question, the collection and analysis of data, including the choice of coding, were all carried out by the researcher, independent of the software.

Seidel et al. (cited in Welsh, 2002) are concerned that using tools such as NVivo distances the researcher from the data; the researcher's focus, they feel, is distracted from the recorded interviews and the written transcripts. They believe that the insights which are gained from close proximity with the data in its 'raw' state are lost and interpretation is consequently poorer. Lewins and Silver (2007) counter-argue

that the ease with which data can be accessed actually increases the researcher's closeness to it. In this study the researcher acquired an intimate knowledge of the data from conducting and transcribing the interviews and focus group, reading and coding the transcripts and continually cross-referencing the nodes with the complete transcripts.

Some of the screenshots from the NVivo programme are illustrated below, providing visual evidence of the NVivo data analysis process.

Figure 3.10 Screen shot of list of interviewees

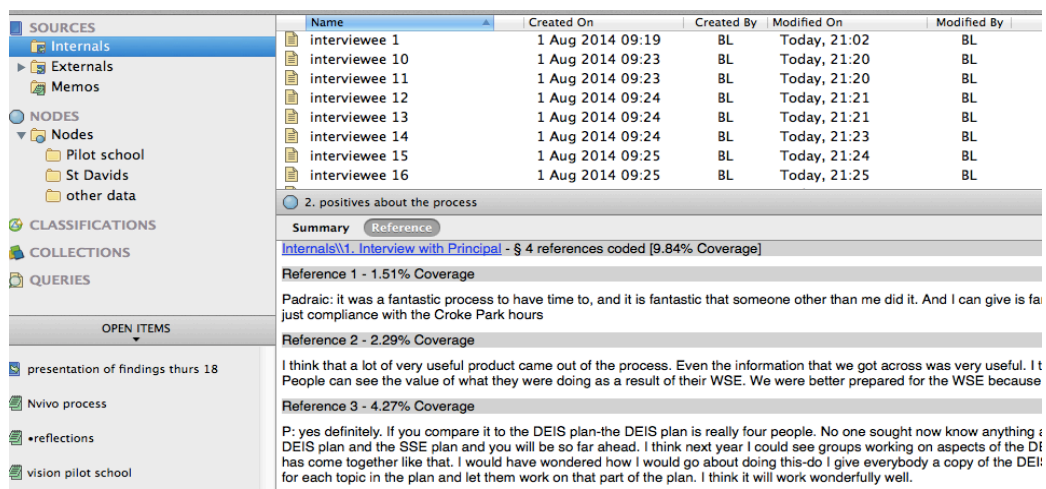
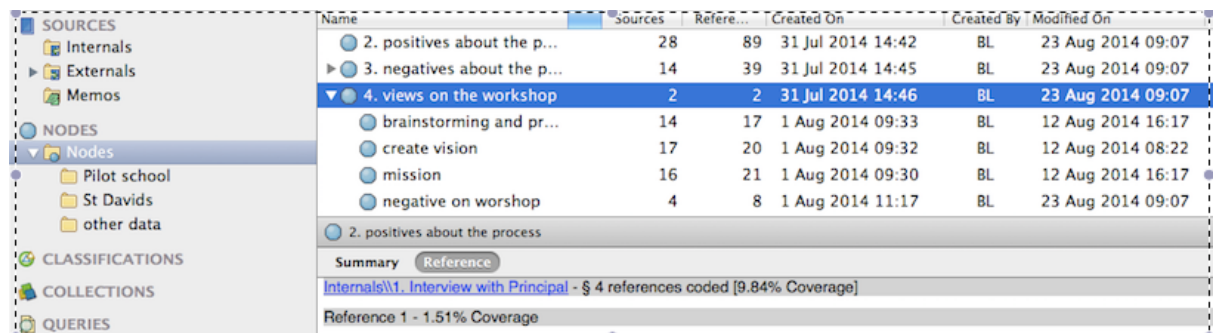
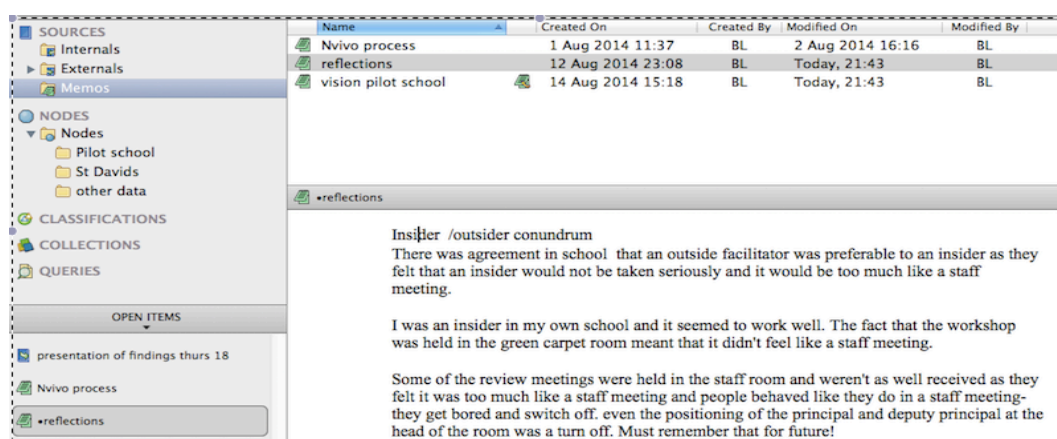


Figure 3.11 Screen shot showing nodes with sub-nodes



The NVivo program allowed the researcher to add comments or memos on a particular theme and these were stored in the Memo file in the source area of the program. These comments could be linked to the particular area.

Figure 3.12 Screen shot showing how memos are created in the programme



3.15 Validity

Reliability and validity are at the core of ensuring rigour in any research. Validity is concerned with whether or not the research establishes or proves what it claims or purports to do. Adopting a case study research design, and drawing from a predominately constructivist paradigm, provides many challenges for the researcher in terms of ensuring validity. A number of significant issues are raised in the literature in relation to validity.

3.15.1 Internal validity and credibility

In traditional research, validity refers to the extent to which the findings accurately describe the reality of the situation. Quantitative researchers maintain that, in order for an experiment to be accurate it must have a truth value (internal validity), it must be applicable (external validity), it must be consistent (reliable or replicable) and it must be neutral (objective) (Schwandt, Lincoln and Guba, 2007). However, most constructivist researchers query the ability of positivist researchers to postulate the precise nature of reality in such a definitive way (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). They contend that positive researchers must postulate relationships and then test them; the relationship cannot be proven, only falsified. For instance, it is difficult to prove something absolutely; but something can be disproven by producing an exception to the rule. Creswell and Miller (2000) state that qualitative researchers need to demonstrate that their studies are credible or believable. Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) state that 'the term validity

has generally been replaced by the term trustworthiness within qualitative research' (Onwuegbuzie and Johnson 2006, p.51). The following terms and associated questions were recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as alternatives to the terms rooted in quantitative research:

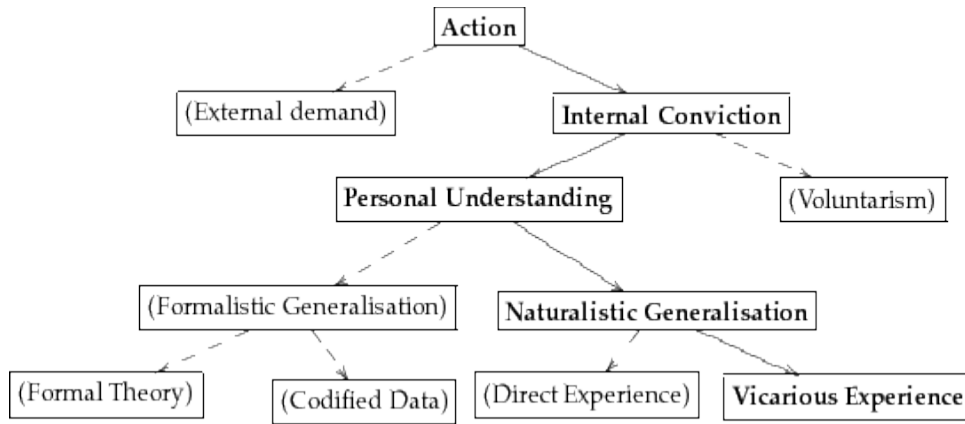
- Transferability for generalisability or external validity; can the findings be applied to a similar situation?
- Confirmability for objectivity; can the reader follow the researcher's thinking?
- Dependability for reliability; how dependable are the results?

3.15.2 Generalisability and Transferability

The issue of drawing generalisations from qualitative research finding has preoccupied researchers from both the positivist and the constructivist paradigm. Positivist researchers contend that the purpose of research is to produce objective formalised knowledge and to draw inferences that can be generalised to other situations (Frideres, 1992). External validity refers to how well inferences generalise to a larger population (Herr and Anderson, 2005). Guba (1985) suggests that, while generalisability is 'an appealing concept', local conditions make it impossible to generalise to any great degree (p.124). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) generalisations involve making a trade-off between internal and external validity. In order to make statements that apply to many contexts, one can include only limited aspects of the local context. Cronbach (1975) assertion that 'when we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalisation is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion' (p.125) illustrates the fact that researchers must be cautious about overstating their findings.

Within the interpretative paradigm, the transferability of a working hypothesis to other situations depends on the degree of similarity between the original situation and the situation to which it is transferred (Hoepfl, 1997). Stake (2008) advocates '*naturalistic generalization*' which is developed through recognising links, similarities and dissimilarities, in varying contexts. He suggests that to generalise from the practical knowledge gained by experience is both intuitive and empirical.

Figure 3.13 Stake's view of change.



Change is based on action, and action is taken either because of external demand or internal convictions. For instance, self-evaluation is a requirement of the DES, but is also proposed by teachers, parents and students. Coercive external demand is often successfully resisted by participants; most lasting change takes place through internal conviction (Stake, 2008). This suggests that those charged with overseeing the implementation of programmes such as self-evaluation would do well to focus on fostering internal conviction. Internal conviction is based on personal understanding and voluntarism. A stated aim of this action research is to increase participants' understanding of self-evaluation and the issues surrounding school improvement. Voluntarism, in this context relates to personal feelings, values and faith. Formal generalisation relates to the propositional knowledge common in academia and how it may apply to other situations. According to Stake (2008) naturalistic generalisation are those made from experience. These experiences are either direct or vicarious, 'second-hand', experiences. The advantage of using a case study research methodology is that both direct and vicarious experiences can be captured in real time. Naturalistic generalisation suggests that something that is observed in one situation may equally apply to a similar type of situation. Some of the findings from this research could conceivably apply to other post-primary schools who are attempting to implement an SSE process.

3.15.3 Objectivity versus Confirmability

Traditional positivist researchers laud quantitative measures for being relatively value-free, and therefore objective. According to these researchers subjectivity leads to results that are both unreliable and invalid. However, many researchers are now questioning the true objectivity of statistical measures and, indeed, the possibility of ever attaining pure objectivity (Eisner, 1991; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Patton (1990) believes that researchers should refrain from futile debates about subjectivity versus objectivity and avoid using those terms entirely. Instead, one should strive for what he terms 'empathic neutrality' (p.55). Empathy 'is a stance toward the people one encounters, while neutrality is a stance toward the findings' (Patton 1990, p.58). A researcher who is neutral tries to be non-judgmental, and strives to report in a balanced way what is discovered. Lincoln and Guba (1985) choose the term 'confirmability' to describe the degree to which the researcher can demonstrate the neutrality of the research interpretations. They suggest providing a 'confirmability audit', or an enquiry trail, consisting of elements such as raw data, analysis notes, reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, and personal notes. Golafshani (2003) contends that an enquiry audit demonstrating consistency of purposes, questions and methods used, is a way of demonstrating confirmability. It enables audiences to have confidence in the findings and the implications of the study (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003).

Phillips (1990) questions whether there is really much difference, in terms of objectivity, between quantitative and qualitative research. Low quality work, whether qualitative or quantitative, is of little value, and high quality work is, at best, only tentative. The high quality work, undertaken in both kinds of research, will be objective, in the sense that it has been open to analysis and criticism, and the evidence offered will have withstood serious scrutiny and peer review. 'The works will have faced potential refutation, and insofar as they have survived, they will be regarded as worthy of further investigation' (Phillips 1990, p.35).

3.15.4 Reliability versus Dependability

Quantitative researchers view reliability as the ability to replicate or repeat an intervention or procedure. They assert that, for research to be deemed reliable, another researcher should be able to repeat the precise steps of the research and achieve the same results. Qualitative researchers argue that it is impossible to conduct the same research twice; by definition, if something is being measured twice, that which is measured the second time is different from that which was measured the first time; you cannot dip your toe into the same stream twice! The idea of dependability, on the other hand, emphasizes the need for the researcher to account for the continually changing environment within which research occurs. The researcher is responsible for observing and describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the researcher approaches the study.

Most importantly, the researcher is also responsible for ensuring that the research is carried out in an ethical manner.

3.16 Ethical Issues

Blumberg et al. (2005) define ethics as the ‘moral principles, norms or standards of behaviour that guide moral choices about our behaviour and our relationships with others’. In carrying out research ‘we are morally bound to conduct our research in a manner that minimises potential harm to those involved in the study’ (Blumberg and Volpe 2008, p.3). Campbell (1997) advises that the researchers must take care to treat their participants with respect at all times and to protect the rights of those who participate in the research. Ethical considerations tend to hinge on three issues: full disclosure and the purpose of the research; voluntary, informed consent; and the privacy of participants (BERA, 2011). As mentioned earlier, the position of the researcher as an insider also poses ethical issues. The researcher took great care to ensure that these issues were respected in this thesis.

3.16.1 Full disclosure and purpose

The researcher ensured that everyone involved in the research was aware of the aims and purpose of the research. Ethical approval was sought and obtained from Dublin City University on submission of an ethics form that outlined in detail the purpose of the research. The researcher also had a meeting with the principal of the school, and the aim, purpose and details of the projects were explained. A proposal for the project was written and given to the principal to forward to the Board of Management. At the commencement of each workshop and before each interview, the participants were informed about the purpose of the research.

3.16.2 Informed consent

In terms of consent, a distinction was drawn between the self-evaluation process and the research process. The self-evaluation process was carried out as part of the participants' work place development programme; as a result, the participation of the teachers and SNAs in the workshops was mandatory. However, participation in the interview process and the completion of the questionnaires was totally voluntary. Staff members were given a letter inviting them to participate in the research before the workshop and the purpose of the research and what it entailed was explained (Appendix H). Participants were advised that they could withdraw from the study at any stage and have any data removed. Those who were interviewed were given a Plain Language Statement to read (Appendix J). They were asked to sign an Informed Consent letter (Appendix K), and permission was sought to record the interviews, which were later transcribed. A small number of individuals did not wish to be recorded and this was respected. In those instances the researcher kept as detailed notes as possible during these interviews. At the start of each workshop the terms of the agreement of participation in the research were made clear to all the participants. Interviewees were advised that they were not obliged to answer any question with which they did not feel comfortable.

3.16.3 Privacy

The need to maintain the confidentiality of the participants at all stages of the research process is very important. Where possible, the participants in the research were assured

that their identity would be kept confidential. Participants need to know that the views they express are treated with the utmost confidentiality, especially in relation to sensitive issues. This is important in fostering open and honest answers. More importantly, participants need to be assured that opinions they voice will not impact negatively on them personally or career wise. This is especially important to participants who have part-time positions. Participants were told that their names would not be revealed in the reporting of the findings, and that coding would be used to protect identities. It was not possible to give this assurance to the principal and deputy principal in the main case study school because their identity could be ascertained from their role. Both individuals kindly agreed to take part in the research anyway.

In the focus group meeting, where confidentiality was not possible, the participants were informed that identities of the individuals would not be revealed. Participants were asked to respect the confidentiality of others in the group. Other than that, the ethical considerations for focus groups are the same as for most other methods of social research (Homan, 1991).

Being forthright and honest and keeping participants informed about the expectations of the group and topic; and not pressurising participants to speak is good practice and was adhered to in this study (Homan, 1991). Where data was presented and discussed, codes were used to protect identities. All identifiable references have been removed from the interviews, the focus group transcripts and from the transcripts of the workshops. All collected data is stored securely and has been used for the purpose of this study alone.

As mentioned earlier there are ethical concerns related to the position of the researcher in the study. There is no issue of power relationships between the researcher and those participating in the research as the researcher is not in a position of power over the participants, and cannot influence their employment. However, he is aware that as a friend and colleague to the staff there was a danger that they could provide answers they felt he wished to hear. The researcher was very much aware that the content of the interviews are sensitive and that there was a need to preserve confidentiality and anonymity at all times.

Finally, Campbell's (1997, p.129) assertion that 'the researcher has an obligation to tell the truth when presenting the findings (even when there is pressure to report results not

revealed by the data)' was respected as far as possible. As an iterative approach to the study was adopted, the researcher made every effort to stay as neutral as possible and not to show bias towards any particular outcome.

3.17 Limitations of the Study

While every effort was made to make this a rigorous study of evaluation in the school, it is recognised that it has limitations. As with any study, the researcher's ontological and epistemological perspective undoubtedly impacted on the research. The researcher is cognisant of the fact that the research design, the choice of questions asked and the general conduct of the researcher during the study, are influenced by his values, beliefs and opinions. While every effort was made to remain as neutral as possible, it is unlikely, by force of human nature, that neutrality was maintained at all times. The role of the researcher as a participant in the research and the fact that the participants were colleagues and friends undoubtedly had some influence on the feedback provided in the interviews. It is hoped that the relatively large sample group interviewed, and the fact that all teachers were surveyed will minimise any potential bias.

Though the percentage of people in the school that took part in the study is high, the size of the study, is relatively small. It is accepted that the findings from the study would have more weight had more schools been included. In particular, a greater number of respondents would have allowed the findings from the questionnaire to be generalised to the wider population. However, the compactness of the study allowed deep insights and a thorough analysis of the subject matter to be gained, and this helped to further an understanding of the evaluation process.

Another limiting factor is the relatively short time frame in which the study was carried out. The main research case study was carried out over one academic year. The research gives useful insights into the implementation of a self-evaluation process, but provides little understanding of how the process might be sustained. Likewise, the study gives a good account of the impact of WSE on the school in the short term, but gives little indication of what the longterm effects will be.

While the parents and students were included in the self-evaluation process, they were not interviewed as part of the research as the focus of the research was on the impact of

SSE and WSE on the teaching staff. The narrow scope of the research is recognised as a limiting factor.

3.18 Summary

This chapter presented the methodological framework for the research and the key issues relating to the choice of paradigm underpinning the research. School evaluation is a complex and multi-dimensional construct that is difficult to research. It is best studied in its own setting and a mixed-method case study approach was used to facilitate this. This approach allowed the researcher to choose a sample that would yield relevant, in-depth information from a group of people in a short period of time. Questionnaires were issued to all the teachers in the school and interviews were carried out with a representative group of teachers. A focus group was held with four of the SNA's in the school, while one individual who could not attend the focus group was interviewed separately. The purpose of the questionnaires was to assess the impact of the SSE process on variables such as psychological empowerment, autonomy, team, and the job satisfaction of the staff. Key points from the questionnaires are extrapolated from the data to ascertain what, if any, changes had occurred. Semi-structured interviews underpinned by the questionnaires and the literature review were used to gain a deeper insight into the SSE process. The interviews looked at the main themes and questions that were highlighted in the literature, and sought to gain an understanding of self-evaluation from the perspective of those who participated in the process. Other relevant issues such as data gathering, sampling, and the ethical issues that arose in this study-anonymity, confidentiality and truth-were respected as far as possible. The limitations of conducting research in a single case study context were discussed. The findings from the research carried out are presented and discussed in chapter four.

Chapter Four

Presentation of Findings and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings to the research question posed in the introduction: ‘*What impact has school evaluation on the teaching staff in an Irish post-primary school?*’ This substantive question will be addressed by answering three interrelated questions:

1. *What is the purpose of school evaluation- development or accountability?*
2. *Who should carry out the evaluation- external or internal agents?*
3. *What form should the evaluation take- inspection or self-evaluation?*

The findings for questionnaire and interviews are analysed and presented separately for clarity, but are interpreted and discussed together to get a more complete picture and to avoid repetition.

4.1 Quantitative findings

The responses to the questionnaires were studied and the key issues were extrapolated. The questionnaire surveyed four areas that were highlighted in the literature as being relevant to the research question; psychological empowerment, autonomy, team, and job satisfaction.

Figure 4.1 Variables and related questions

Areas of relevance (variables)	Questions in the survey
Psychological Empowerment	Statement 1-10
Autonomy	Statement 11-15
Teams	Statement 16-21
Job Satisfaction	Statement 22-25

4.1.1 Questionnaire Results

Figure 4.2 shows the survey scores for teachers in the research school for the four variables as recorded before the SSE process took place in September 2012 and at the end of the academic year in May 2013. The rating of the survey is from 1-10 with one signifying the lowest level and ten being the highest. A rating of 1-6.9 is deemed to be a low score, 7 to 8.9 is seen as satisfactory, and 9 and 10 are considered high scores (based on Fredrick Reichheld's research in *Harvard Business Review* 2003). The scores for each variable is calculated by getting the average scores of all the respondents for each statement. For instance, the average score for the statement *I am proud of my job in the school* is 9.06 at the start of the process. The scores for the overall dimension of PE, Autonomy, Team and Job Satisfaction are calculated by getting an average of all the variables for that dimension. The figures indicate that scores for all four variables are satisfactory, with the score for psychological empowerment being the highest score at 7.97 in 2012 and rising to 8.56 in 2013. The score for job satisfaction was the lowest at 6.83 at the start of the process, though it rose to 7.68 over the year, which was the highest increase of the four variables.

Figure 4.2 Results of survey taken before and after the SSE process

Scoring 0-10	Psychological Empowerment	Autonomy	Team	Job Satisfaction
Before (Sept. 2012)	7.97	7.73	7.71	6.83
After (May 2013)	8.56	8.03	8.00	7.68
Difference	+0.59	+0.30	+0.29	+0.85

4.1.2 Psychological Empowerment

As already stated, Psychological empowerment refers to a global mind-set reflecting a proactive orientation with regard to one's role in the organization. The findings show that the dimensions of PE increased over the course of the SSE process. The statement '*The work I do correspond well to my competencies*' increased from 7.91 to 8.36; there was an increase from 8.24 to 8.77 for the statement '*I make a meaningful contribution to the school's success*'; and '*The work I do makes a difference here*' went up from 8.17 to 8.54. Interestingly, the highest score for any variable is, '*I am proud of my job in the school*' with a high score of 9.06, rising to 9.36 in 2013.

In summary, the results indicate that the staff members in the Research School the staff are proud of the job they do; they feels competent they can perform their work well; they believe that the work they do is meaningful; and that their job makes an impact on the school.

Figure 4.3 Psychological Empowerment: 7.97 to 8.56

Variable of the dimension of PE	Sept 2012	May 2013
1. I am proud of my job in the school	9.06	9.36
2. I make a meaningful contribution to the school's success	8.24	8.77
3. The work I do correspond well to my competencies	7.91	8.36
4. The work I do makes a difference here	8.17	8.54
5. I know how my role contributes to the success of the school	7.76	8.42
6. This is the kind of job in which I can feel a sense of accomplishment	7.94	8.62
7. I see which competencies I need to develop in my job	7.82	8.51
8. I feel I am developing professionally in my job	7.55	7.90
9. I understand how to reach the goals in my job	7.54	8.23
10. I understand clearly my priorities	7.74	8.87

4.1.3 Autonomy

There were increases to all the items listed under the dimension of *Autonomy*. Items related to employees autonomy, involvement in decision making, having consideration for employees suggestions and generally being supported by colleagues and by the management in the school all increased over the course of the year. This suggests that the staff feel more involved in the running of the school and have a greater feeling of self-determination. Self-determination is seen as an important dimension of empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995b). The highest score was for the statement, *‘My manager has the right level of autonomy to support me in my job’* which increased from 7.97 to 8.59. The lowest score was for the question *‘I’m enough involved into decisions that affect my work’* with a starting score of 6.49, rising to 7.51 over the year. This gives an indication of the culture in the school prior to the SSE where staff had little involvement in decision making in the school. The result for the statement *‘Suggestions I make are seriously considered’* is also low at 6.71 rising to 7.67 after the SSE.

Figure 4.4 Autonomy: 7.73 to 8.03

Variable for the dimension of Autonomy	Sept 2012	May 2013
11. I have the right level of autonomy to carry out my work successfully	7.91	8.13
12. I’m enough involved into decisions that affect my work	6.49	7.51
13. Suggestions I make are seriously considered	6.71	7.67
14. I have the right level of support from others to carry out my job successfully	7.54	8.23
15. My manager has the right level of autonomy to support me in my job	7.97	8.59

These findings suggest that the level of autonomy in the staff increased over the course of the process. People feel supported by the principal and by their colleagues. It also shows however, that there is still some improvement that could be made in relation to their involvement in decision making and how much their ideas and suggestions are embraced by management.

4.1.4 Team

A team is defined by Katzenbach and Smith (1993) as, ‘a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable’. The score for team increased from 7.71 to 8.00 indicating that the level of teamwork increased over the course of the SSE process. The highest item for this variable is *‘There is an openness and trust between my manager and I’*. Interestingly, only two items decreased slightly over the process and both related to team. *‘I consider myself part of a team’* decreased from 8.06 to 8.00 and *‘There is an openness and trust between my manager and I’* which fell slightly from 8.24 to 8.21.

Figure 4.5 Team: 7.71 to 8.00

Figure 4.6 Variable for the dimension Team	Sept 2012	May 2013
16. I consider myself part of a team	8.06	8.00
17. If there is a problem, we work together to solve it	7.18	7.64
18. The school management works well as a team	7.76	8.36
19. There is a good level of trust between individuals in the school	6.97	7.46
20. If I make a mistake I have the support of my manager	8.03	8.31
21. There is an openness and trust between my manager and I	8.24	8.21

In summary, there is a good level of trust between staff members in the school, between the manager and the staff, and between members of the management team. The staff

feels that if problems arise, the team works together to address them, and that they have the support of the principal if things go wrong. However, it reveals that the teamwork and trust was low between the staff before the process and that there is scope to improve teamwork further as none of the variables were in the ‘*High*’ score.

4.1.5 Job Satisfaction

The scores for all four items related to job satisfaction increased. The satisfaction with the level of recognition they received was raised (7.54 to 8.23), they feel more valued in the school (7.49 to 7.82) and they are getting more feedback on their job performance (5.80 to 7.15). The score for the level of feedback they received at the start of the SSE process was, by far, the lowest of all the scores at 5.80 giving another indication of the culture that existed in the school. The findings show that people are happier with the amount of information they are getting in relation to the goals and strategies of the school, with a rise from 6.49 to 7.51 for this item. Overall, the level of Job Satisfaction increased from a low 6.83 to a satisfactory level of 7.68. Again, the findings reveal that there is much work to be done before the satisfaction levels reach the *High* level.

Figure 4.6 Job Satisfaction: 6.83 to 7.68

Variable for the dimension Job Satisfaction	Sept 2012	May 2013
22. Overall, I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	7.54	8.23
23. I feel valued as an employee	7.49	7.82
24. I receive feedback about my job performance	5.80	7.15
25. I have enough information on long terms goals and strategies of the school	6.49	7.51

4.2 Qualitative Findings

This section presents the findings of the semi-structured interviews and the focus group. Six people were interviewed in the pilot school, the principal, the deputy principal and four other teachers. The feedback from the principal and teachers in the pilot school was used to adjust and refine the SSE process in the Research School. Some interesting insights from the interviews on evaluation were included in the presentation of findings

from the Research School. Twenty two teachers were interviewed in the Research School, including the principal and the deputy principal, and one SNA. The findings from the focus group are presented and analysed with the interview findings for reasons of convenience.

The interviews were designed to address questions that were raised in the literature review and the questionnaires relating to the main research question. Recurring themes and ideas were explored in depth to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the SSE on the staff in the school. All the interviewees were asked similar questions, although the principal and deputy principal were probed more about the leadership of the process. The interview schedule is included as Appendix J.

This research is buttressed by the following questions:

1. *What is the purpose of school evaluation- development or accountability?*
2. *Who should carry out the evaluation-external agents or internal stakeholders?*
3. *What form should the evaluation take-inspection or self-evaluation?*

The findings of the interviews and focus groups will be presented and analysed together. The findings in relation to the implementation of the SSE process are presented after the three questions have been addressed.

4.3 What is the purpose of evaluation- development or accountability?

The findings show that there is a general acceptance that the school has to be accountable to its stakeholders. The deputy principal maintained that the school should be accountable for the extra resources it received from the Department: ‘we’re getting money as a DEIS school. We have a favourable pupil-teacher ratio. If you want extra resources you have to be accountable’. There is a strong feeling among the staff that they are accountable to the parents and students for their classroom performance. For instance, Interviewee 1 stated, ‘I’m getting paid a salary to do a particular job, and I wouldn’t let anyone think that I am sitting up there and taking my salary and not doing a good job’. Another teacher contended that ‘the days of going into a class and not performing, are gone’ (Interviewee 6).

4.3.1 Accountability

The findings demonstrate that both self-evaluation and inspection serve accountability functions within the school.

4.3.2 SSE and Accountability

The principal noted a shift in responsibility from management to the staff due to the SSE process: ‘it was left very much up to them, and not to me, and not to you [researcher]. You facilitated it, and I supported it; but it was very much their baby-it was very much what they wanted to do. It was their vision of the kind of school they wanted’. One SNA discerned a change in the mindset of people in the school: ‘I think we started to think about things in a different way...I thought it was good to just step back and say, “Look we are all in this together; we have to do something about it”, asserted SNA 2. The deputy principal agreed stating, ‘In previous years it was - we have an idea that somebody else’s should implement. The new era is - we have an idea, can we implement it? Can we do it? Schools have a tradition of “somebody should do something”, and that’s a recipe for nothing getting done’.

In the SSE process staff members were held accountable for achieving the objectives of their project. Three factors were seen as effective for ensuring that people were accountable in the groups. Firstly, setting clear objectives and measurable targets helped ensure that there was transparency about what each group were aiming to achieve. Interviewee 13 explained, ‘we met up and were assigned certain tasks...definitely having the targets for what we wanted to do at each stage was helpful’. Secondly, the review meeting was seen as important to ensure people are accountable for achieving their goals. The review process provided an element of peer pressure to ensure that groups did what they said they would do: ‘that last staff meeting-there was no way that I was going to go in there and say we have nothing done. I would do 10 hours, 20 hours, just to say that it’s done’ asserted Interviewee 17. Another teacher contended that the group created its own dynamic that ensured accountability: ‘there was just a little bit of tension-which is essential for a group to work. Tension in the sense that, had I arranged a meeting for this afternoon and someone said “could we not postpone that”-and I would say, “okay let’s postpone it for a day or two”; but if I was fobbed off again the next day, I got a bit ratty!’ (Interviewee 16). However, there is evidence that not all the

staff embraced the additional responsibility. According to Interviewee 5, ‘the best thing about this was also the worst thing - you were told this is what you need to do, so go away and do it in your own time; and some people did that, and maybe some people took advantage of it’. Interviewee 17 agreed asserting that, ‘in our group, I did most of it. It was just that it was easier for me to do it myself. The other two always had something on...now I know there were some groups where they all worked together, but in most groups, one or two people stuck together and just did it, and that’s what brought out the end product’.

While the SSE was seen as effective in determining internal accountability it also can ensure external accountability. The targets set by the groups and in particular, the targets set by the subject groups for improvement in literacy, are very specific and measurable. They are available on the website for parents and all the other stakeholders to see and inspectors can determine how successful the school is by reviewing the targets.

4.3.3 WSE and Accountability

The WSE was also seen as being very effective in verifying accountability to external stakeholders. Interviewee 5 asserted, ‘if you’re working towards anything, there is always an awarding body, an outside thing...to have any kind of credibility it does need to be from the outside’. Interviewee 8 believes that ‘it was good to be reviewed, and in particular to be reviewed by somebody from outside, and who is detached - they can be objective’. There was agreement that external validation was important to ensure accountability to the parents and students, ‘I think it’s important for the kids and the parents to know that the school is doing what they are supposed to be doing, and that the teaching is of a high standard,’ asserted Interviewee 14. Interviewee 16 likened it to a driving test, ‘It’s like driving for a long time, and it is always good to recheck the rules to see have I adopted any bad habits’.

4.3.4 Development

There is evidence that both internal and external evaluation helped with the development of the school.

4.3.5 SSE and Development

There is strong evidence that the SSE process did bring about real improvement to the school. Many of the interviewees spoke about the process providing ‘the impetus’ to carry out work that needed to be done in the school. The deputy principal observed that, ‘it is real action, rather than talking about something’. The staff carried out a significant number of projects over the course of the year (see Appendix K). A number of projects that had been delayed, for instance, were finally completed as a result of SSE. The principal of the pilot school cited the work that was done on the website, ‘some things wouldn’t have been done at all-for instance the website was stagnant for years. It is kept regularly updated now’. The principal in the Research School highlighted the need to take an integrated approach to school improvement, ‘I think people working in isolation don’t work. I mean if you have one group working on lack of attainment, and another group working on attendance, sometimes the lack of attainment can be due to lack of attendance so they are interlinked. We can’t look at it in isolation’.

The findings suggest that the SSE process empowered teachers and allowed them become more involved in decision-making in the school: ‘it kind of brings things back to the teachers; it was given to the teachers again’, asserted Interviewee 7. Interviewee 3 felt that it energized teachers into action: ‘Sometimes as teachers we get really complacent...we often leave the promotion of the school, the development of the school, or making the school more efficient, to management’. Another interviewee observed that teachers were more willing to take the initiative, ‘others took the initiative and went looking for things to do; things to improve the school’, asserted Interviewee 1. According to Interviewee 2 this is a gradual process, ‘now people are noticing what others are doing-small things like the garden-small thing just done over time. Before people would say, “we can’t do it”, now they see that they can do things.’

The process was seen to remove some of the barriers that deterred people from becoming involved in school development. The process strengthened the resolve of those who wanted to effect change in the school: 'I think people always wanted to do something, but would be afraid to do it. But now I think they feel that this is our school and we can make it a better place,' asserted Interviewee 2. He believed that this feeling of empowerment originated in the workshop: 'when you heard everybody at the meeting saying "yes the outside of the school looks terrible", that gave people a license to do something about it'. As well as strengthening those who wanted to bring about change, it reduced the influence of those who in the past may have been a barrier to progress: 'There are people still who wouldn't be interested in doing anything but there wouldn't be any vocalization of it now, where once there would have been' asserted Interviewee 2. The process allowed people easier access to the resources needed to complete the work. 'It allowed me to go off and do things without having to grovel too much for resources and things like that', asserted Interviewee 1.

Some teachers were highly motivated by the process and really immersed themselves in their projects. 'Every day I was thinking about it. We are on the same corridor, so every day we would meet and be chatting about the project. We were constantly talking about it; we would think of things to do for next year', stated Interviewee 9. Most groups exceeded their targets: 'At the end, we went off and did other things. For example, the school is badly signposted, we wanted things done more professionally', asserted Interviewee 8. Interviewee 16 felt that people were willing to do more work because they could see that improvements would benefit everyone in the school; 'Nobody gave out about having to do extra work. I think people - I won't say they enjoyed doing it, that would be an overstatement - but they were happy that this is what they wanted to do for the school'.

The findings indicate that both SSE and WSE encouraged staff to be more reflective. SNA 2 commented that as a result of engaging in internal evaluation, 'I think we started to think about things in a different way, quite often you are busy doing what you are doing and you don't often stop to think about what you're doing'. Interviewee 15 commented that she 'thought it was good because it got people thinking about the role they had in the school'. Interviewee 12 found that WSE made him reflect on how he taught his subject, 'I think in the normal activity of the school day you never get the

chance to reflect on what you did, you never get the chance to focus on how your subject is taught-you might look at the plan for a subject only once in the year’.

SSE was shown to improve organisational learning. The findings suggest that it was a learning process for all the staff and helped them develop a greater understanding of the school. Newly appointed teachers, in particular, learned a lot about the school from the process: ‘I found it very informative’ commented Interviewee 14. ‘There were loads of little things, even to do with my own subject that you wouldn’t have thought about’. Interviewee 11 agreed, stating that, ‘it was a good environment-it was a learning environment as well’. Interviewee 8 explained how he developed a greater understanding of the school from his work on the website:

every time we sat down there was a further clarification of the thinking process. We were getting closer and closer to what we wanted...I found it a little bit frustrating that there was a load of discussion and more discussion; but in hindsight, I now realize that the discussion was really the work...there were different nuances involved that I hadn’t expected. There were a lot of simple things involved; simple but important, and I learned an awful lot from the process.

The findings suggest that the SSE generated an increased interest in professional development among some teachers. The principal of the pilot school observed that more teachers were enrolling for different training courses: ‘I don’t know if they’re related-I think they are; two of the staff took on the postgrad diploma and finished it. Three more of them have taken on Masters. That is unusual to have five people to go and pay money to go back to college at a time when you get nothing back for it’. The evidence also supports the notion that SSE helps a school prepare for WSE. The principal commented that, ‘even the information that we got across was very useful...people saw the value of what they were doing during the WSE. We were better prepared for the WSE because we had the SSE’.

4.3.6 WSE and Development

WSE was also shown to contribute to the development of the school. Interviewee 8 believes that the experience and expertise of the inspectors can benefit the school and broaden the perspective of teachers beyond the scope of the Research School. ‘These people have worked in other schools and they can tell you things like your suspension rate is higher than other similar schools’. Interviewee 9 feels that the views of the

inspectors can benefit the school because, ‘if they are recommending something you have to listen because they are looking at it with a pair of fresh eyes’. She feels that a good inspector can raise the performance of the teacher, ‘it’s a bit like having our supervisor in college or a coach on your football team; somebody pushing you the whole time’. The process was seen to help teachers to differentiate what was good practice and what was not. The principal of the Research School felt that the process provided a blue print of best practice so that teachers were clearer in their minds about what was expected of them ‘I think the inspectors identified the Maths folder as being top-quality and that is now available on the intranet. Any teacher from any other subject can look at that’.

4.4 Who should carry out the evaluation-external or internal agents?

It was found that internal and external evaluation are complementary and are both necessary as they examines different aspects of the school.

4.4.1 External Evaluation

External evaluation is suitable for evaluating aspects that an internal agent would find difficult. For instance, Interviewee 6 stated that, ‘the way I look at the Whole School Evaluation is that, they are coming in to inspect the standard of the teaching. I don’t think that could be done in the self-evaluation’. On the other hand, Interviewee 14 felt that ‘the big things were noticed by the external evaluators...but they wouldn’t notice some of the smaller aspects, which could be huge things for us’. An example was pastoral care; the inspectors were oblivious to all the positive measures that were taken in the school in relation to pastoral care, and then identified the lack of a pastoral care policy as a main finding in their report. Interviewee 8 observed: ‘I think the statement that we don’t have a pastoral care policy is too bald-it doesn’t reflect the fact that we have a pastoral care program’.

External evaluation has the capacity to identify areas in the school that may have been missed by an internal evaluation. Interviewee 1 suggested that, ‘you are blind to some problems because you’re living with them day-to-day’. One teacher felt that there were issues that were off-limits in an internal evaluation that could be raised in an evaluation

conducted by an external agency: 'I have no problem with being told from an outside source that, say for instance, the care-room had to be looked at. I mean, if I raise that at a staff meeting I would be stumped; you shouldn't raise questions about the care room because they might take it away,' asserted Interviewee 16. [The carerom is a supervised room where disruptive students are sent and is an integral part of the discipline system in the school].

Interviewee 17 was very definite about the role external evaluation played in ensuring that internal evaluation was done well:

I think that self-evaluation without the external evaluation would be pointless because people wouldn't do it. Take for instance our Special Needs, would we have done anything about it if we didn't think that there was a chance of Whole School Evaluation. If the external inspectors weren't going to come in and check what I did, would I have bothered? Probably not!

4.4.2 Internal Evaluation

The findings provide some support for the contention that those inside a school are best placed to evaluate the school. Interviewee 1 asserted that, 'you are not engaging in a tick the box process or some standardized process that is rolled out across all schools. You are doing something that comes from you - you know best what your problems are because you are in them'. The evidence is ambivalent in relation to the ability of individuals to honestly evaluate their own school. Most people's reflex answer is to assert they can, but then they qualify their answer. Interviewee 5 response was typical, 'Yes I do think that teachers can evaluate themselves properly. I suppose it comes down to the individual people. There is this idea that, you know, you don't want to rock the boat, if there is a system in place, people might not want to be the person who suggests changes to it'. Another teacher felt that the level of analysis of issues was quite superficial as people were reluctant to advocate radical change in the fear that it might increase their workload, 'I think initially we probably stayed on the surface. I think people are reluctant to open a can of worms; to open up something that could get bigger and then we would have to do more work' (Interviewee 9).

There is evidence that when people analyse the issues in their own school, they have a better understanding of the changes that are necessary and are more committed to implementing these changes. One teacher felt that the generation of ideas from within

the staff increased the level of ownership and commitment to implement the ideas: 'it probably wouldn't be any different to management ideas, but because we were involved in it, and we came up with them ourselves, people were more enthusiastic about being involved in them than if they had been told this is what you have to do' (Interviewee 13). The deputy principal insisted, 'it has to come from the staff, it has to come from people's own ideas because if it doesn't - you're automatically isolating them, rejecting what they think is important'.

4.4.3 Argument for both

There was almost unanimous agreement that having a dual process of evaluation was the best strategy to improve standards and quality within the school. Internal and external evaluations are both seen as necessary and complementary to each other. Interviewee 16 believes having both systems of evaluation in a school provides a more thorough evaluation, 'I think having both provides checks and counter checks, and I think that has to be a good thing'. Interviewee 5 suggested that external evaluation is needed to provide the objective perspective: 'I think you do need both, because people are too biased; you have to have some level of someone else coming in and checking'. According to Interviewee 4, 'a little bit of both is important. I think sometimes there is a lot to be learned from somebody from the outside coming in and having a look; again I suppose it depends on how it is done'. Interviewee 5 felt that the inspectors offer a more honest opinion, 'I think you're never going to be as truthful as somebody from the outside will be.' On the other hand, internal evaluation builds more commitment to implement the changes needed.

Interviewee 15 cautioned that it was imperative that any evaluation does not deflect the focus from teaching and learning; 'we wouldn't want to become like the UK where it's a load of paperwork and little emphasis on teaching'

4.5 What form should the evaluation take- inspection or self-evaluation?

This research supports a dual process of evaluation in a school. The findings will now be analysed to gain some insights into what form the self-evaluation and the inspection should take.

4.5.1 Whole School Evaluation

The WSE process was remarkably well received in the Research School. Most teachers felt that overall the WSE was a positive and effective process. Interviewee 12 commented that, 'I thought the Whole School Evaluation was one of the best processes that ever happened in the school. It was the best thing that happened to me in ten years'. Another teacher said, 'I think if I was a principal in the school the first thing I would ask for is the WSE...we do a lot of good things in the school, but we don't focus; it shone a light on our weaknesses, we all say "I'm doing this and I'm doing that", but we are slow to say, "I'm not doing this and I need to do it" (Interviewee 19).

There was recognition that there were benefits to the school of having a WSE. The findings suggest that WSE provides an impetus for teachers to improve many of their practices such as their planning and paperwork. Interviewee 13 explained how WSE improved her level of organization, 'Now I do keep weekly plans anyway, but having everything together was good. I did a class profile of things I wanted to have there in case I was inspected. I do that weekly; it pulls everything together; it helped me get organised'. The preparation required for the WSE extended beyond maintaining up to date lesson plans. One teachers said that the process encouraged him to undertake research on what was expected of him as a teacher: 'For the inspection I had to do external reading that I hadn't done for years...all of a sudden I had to really get an insight into what I should be doing as a teacher. And it was a bit of a shock, because I had been teaching in a certain way for ten years, but it was a good change' (Interviewee 12). The WSE provided affirmation of the good work that was being conducted in the school. Interviewee 7 believed that it provided encouragement and recognition for those who were performing well, 'we are on our own in the class and no one says you are doing well. Every individual in this world needs to be told they are doing well'. The principal asserted that the process reinforced things he had been saying to the staff, 'I

have been talking at staff meetings for a long time about teaching techniques and things like that-some people may not have seen the significance of it before; those who adopted those approaches for the WSE would have seen the benefits of it'. There were also some negatives of the WSE process.

There was certainly a great feeling of camaraderie among the staff as the school prepared for the WSE. The principal believed that, 'more than ever, we were there as a group. It was us together, more than ever before-it was fantastic'. Another teacher highlighted the amount of sharing of resources and ideas that took place prior to the WSE: 'one thing I thought that was great was that I got a lot of opinions from other teachers; there was a lot of sharing of opinions and sharing different teaching practices,' asserted Interviewee 19.

Most people viewed the inspectors in a positive light. People generally accepted that the recommendations were fair: 'A lot of the points they made were fair, although there were a couple of things they suggested that were unrealistic,' asserted Interviewee 11. He reflected the views of the majority when he said that, 'the way they approached us on the day was good, given that they had to assess us and say whether we were good or bad...I didn't think they went out of their way to get us, or anything like that'. However, one teacher suggested that: 'there is an attitude towards inspectors anyway-people are putting on an act for them.

They come in to see a lesson and you give them the best lesson you've ever done, which isn't how schools work on a day-to-day basis. In my opinion, the whole idea of inspection is that we have to pull the wool over these people's eyes and they are trying to catch us out, it's like cats and mouse!

(Interviewee 1)

Undoubtedly, the process was perceived as a stressful one by most teachers. Interviewee 11 stated that he 'found the whole thing stressful; I was panic-stricken when the text to say they were coming to my class appeared'. Interviewee 6 asserted that she 'was nervous about it- leading up to it, and waiting for it. I think that it went really well. They came into my class and I was very nervous with them coming in, but I was delighted with how it went'. According to the deputy principal the most stressful part of the process for management was the meeting between the inspectors and the Board of Management where the school had to 'articulate and justify what we did in the school and why we do this', against a fairly rigorous interrogation from the inspectors.

Interviewee 16 felt that it was important that, ‘we do not scare the living daylights out of people’. He suggests that the process should be one where the teachers feel they are being helped rather than inspected. ‘Why do people not go to the doctor or not go to the dentist-because they are frightened. They have a bad experience so they don’t go; and if they don’t go they could develop problems that could have been sorted out at an earlier stage’. Interviewee 4 agreed, ‘it shouldn’t be the kind of thing where somebody’s professionalism is undermined, where they fear somebody coming in with the ‘*bata*’ [stick] to engender fear to get you to do something’. She was emphatic that the inspectors needed to build a trusting relationship with the teacher so that the teachers will accept feedback in a positive way: ‘it depends on the inspectors, it depends whether they’re willing to chat; how much time they have. If they were willing to have a chat and to say, “that was brilliant”- or if I was doing something wrong, they might say, “you could do it this way”. I would love that- to have some kind of feedback’.

Another teacher believed that one inspector did not understand the culture in the school, ‘I think the lady in question didn’t actually “get” our school. One girl did “get it”. I think she worked in our type of school, but the other girl didn’t get DEIS schools at all’, asserted Interviewee 7. She said of the inspectors: ‘I get the feeling they haven’t been teaching for a long time. You need an inspector who has come straight out of teaching in a DEIS school to mark a DEIS school’. She also felt that the recommendations were ‘nit-picking’. Generally speaking, however, teachers felt the recommendations were fair although some were seen as unrealistic.

It was not until the inspectors were compiling their report that the school became defensive. The principal was concerned that the report should show the school in a positive light. He strongly complained that the language in the report was not constructive, and that more weighting was given to negative aspects than to the positive elements that were highlighted. A heated and lengthy discussion between the principal and the Lead Inspector resulted in what the school would see as a fairer report, but what others might view as a less accurate one.

4.5.2 School Self-Evaluation

The overall impression of the self-evaluation process was very positive. Interviewees used phrases such as, ‘I thought it was very good’ (Interviewee 3), ‘I think it was very useful’ (Interviewee 16), ‘I liked it, I have to say (Interviewee 2).

Getting teachers together to discuss issues that concerned the entire school was seen as very positive for the school. ‘I found it to be useful to get everybody in the same room, discussing things that are outside the classroom in particular. The staff welcomed the opportunity to reflect on how the school was performing, ‘in the helter skelter of life that we lead, we never get the chance to reflect on how we could improve,’ asserted Interviewee 12. The process was perceived as giving the school year a structure and focus: ‘I thought it was a great way to start the year, everybody was brought together and you are able to talk about things, and what you want to improve-and I think things have improved throughout the year as a result’ (SNA 1). Interviewee 6 concluded that, ‘at the end of the year it was great to sit down together and say we have this done, and this done; so definitely I thought it was great’.

All the interviewees agreed that it was a worthwhile use of Croke Park hours. [Croke Park hours refers to an industrial agreement between the teachers unions and the government in which teachers agree to carry out a specified amount of extra work in the school]. Interviewee 3 stated that, ‘I think we all knew we had to do the Croke Park hours; we all agreed that if we were going to do it that it should be an effective use of our time; and I think it was an effective use of our time’.

All the participants welcomed the inclusive nature of the process. The workshop itself was seen as giving people in the staff a forum to voice their views. Interviewee 16 stated that, ‘initially on the day, I would have thought that this is a skit, it’s not a very serious exercise. Then I realised as the day went down that it allowed me, and others-some people whom I never heard speak up before, say things, express their views...I think it actually brought out people’. Interviewee 7 agreed, noting that young staff members in particular felt comfortable making a contribution: ‘I know when I was a younger teacher I didn’t feel part of anything here. I had to shut up until the senior members spoke, while I feel at least here, the younger teachers have some kind of voice’. This was borne out by a young teacher who was delighted that he had an input: ‘yes I felt quite comfortable speaking-I felt my opinion would be valued. For instance,

in the workshop anything that anyone says was put up on the flipchart. It was valued and it was respected' (Interviewee 11). At the same time, people were willing to challenge each other; 'you'll find that when you are with your friends you are talking about things in a more constructive way...they can be open in front of them- they can say "well, I don't think that would work"'.

Including the SNA's in the process was important; they provide a unique perspective of the school as they have access to many different classrooms. It also helped to bolster their status in the school and raise their levels of empowerment. SNA 2 asserted:

I think we are a big part of the school, and we are involved with a lot of the students, even if they're not special needs we meet a lot of students in the school, so I think we can throw something different in. We see the school differently from what the teachers see. We see the boys in the corridor, and the classroom, we hear what the lads are talking about. So I think it's good to have our opinion as well'.

The Parent Council were asked to contribute to the process and they responded very earnestly. They organised an additional meeting, for Parent Council members alone, in order that they might give a more considered input to the evaluation.

Not everybody in the school felt positive towards the process. Interviewee 2 stated that, 'some people thought the workshop was a waste of time, that we could have used it to do something practical instead of talking about things. The problem was that without the talk, you didn't know what to do. You have to decide what you want to do first'. Some staff members were more disposed to support projects and ideas that directly related to their teaching rather than to school-wide initiatives. 'They were going to do something; but not something that would be school wide but something very narrow that would benefit their own class,' contended Interviewee 2.

The complexity of setting targets was highlighted in the study. The principal of the pilot school felt that there are mixed messages emanating from the DES regarding targets: 'The official line is that it should be largely quantitative that you should be looking for a 2% or 5% increase in attendance...it is clear to everyone actually that having an attendance of 90% is not a whole lot different than having an attendance of 91%'.

He explained the need to understand the entire situation when analysing numbers:

For instance, on the chart behind me there is quantitative data on attendance...the Inspectorate commented that in 2008 the attendance in April was 75%, which is low, but we could point to the roll book and notes we have kept that they are not the 'at-risk' families; they are the more well-to-do families and that's when the holiday period kicks off. These are the families who have invested in family time and April is the only time they can afford to go on a family holiday'.

He also cautioned that targets can lead to practices such as 'teaching to the test' and that 'teaching to the test is not an assessment of children's understanding of the curriculum; it's simply a test of a child's ability to master this test'.

4.5.3 Experiences of the SSE Process

The following section will evaluate the implementation process of SSE as it emerged in the pilot school and in the Research School. Lessons that were learnt from the pilot school were implemented in Research School, with the aim of implementing an effective process that would motivate the staff and bring about improvements to the school. The process is evaluated under the different steps as they ensued in the school.

The majority of those interviewed maintained that the evaluation of the school should initially be a broad one incorporating every aspect of the school's performance. 'I would imagine if you're starting from scratch, the first year would be to do an overview of everything and then you start to drill down from there,' contended the principal. The deputy principal believed that it is better if the themes are allowed to emerge naturally from the process:

Well, its self-evaluation, so you must not direct things too much...we evaluated ourselves broadly, which gave it a good foundation...and you see, as the year went on, some areas became less important, so you do eventually focus on a few key things.

He felt that restricting the scope of the evaluation went against the spirit of self-evaluation: 'If you start telling people what they have to look at, you lose a little bit of your energy and you are going back to "you must do this".'

However, one teacher strongly agreed with the Departments approach of taking a narrow perspective initially. 'If it was left to me I would just pick one area that we would focus on. Once one is properly in place, that will flow on the next year, and next

year you could add on a second area...If I had my way I would like to see a school do a little, and do it well' asserted Interviewee 8. Interviewee 13 counter-argued by saying, 'I don't think we went too broad...I understand where they are coming from- but we did so many more things as well; I don't think numeracy and literacy fell down because we did those other things'. A number of teachers felt that it was important to evaluate all the areas but that the timescale for addressing the issues should be increased. Interviewee 17 asserted that, 'the school wouldn't work as well if you left out one of the areas. So I think it was important that all of the areas were done but we needed to give ourselves more time.'

4.5.4 The initial workshop

All the interviewees remarked on the high levels of participation from the staff in the workshop, compared to normal staff meetings. They felt that individuals who did not usually speak in staff meetings participated in the discussion. 'The way you did it, sitting around in a circle and things, people had a lot more to say than they normally would,' asserted Interviewee 1. Working in small groups also encouraged more people to speak, 'in the workshops you had to participate because the groups were small and feedback was looked for. This was perfect for getting people's ideas; because a lot of people have good ideas' asserted Interviewee 2. However, Interviewee 1 pointed out that the drawback of this is that the views put forward are not always well considered: 'they often say something-anything because they are under pressure. They are panicking and say, "I have to say something here", and they come out with something they might never have thought about before.'

4.5.5 Mission

Those interviewed were unanimous that the discussion on the mission of the school was worthwhile. Interviewee 3 stated that it was good because it gathered different views together: 'People have different opinions, some people were thinking about the children only; others were thinking about the subject mainly; so to combine those opinions was good'. Interviewee 1 liked the exercise because it looked at the big picture: 'what I liked was that it was a whole group-think about the direction the school is taking. It dealt with issues about the whole school, like the facade of the school, the discipline and the entire

school'. However, he felt that the exercise needed to be concluded by producing an actual mission statement. 'I would have liked if we had come up with a statement that we could have put on a website; just something to say "we are who we are; this is what we do; this is what we think of the children that come here"; that would be important'.

The deputy principal felt that the mission should be discussed more frequently, 'that's something we haven't been good at doing as a profession ...what is the purpose? What are we here for?' He believed it pulled the different elements of the school together, 'If we don't get that right we are in disarray, a lot of things in the school are joined up'. He believes it pulls the different views of the staff together also, 'yes it's good because it grounds people; and people see how different people have different views of the school, what they see as a priority may not be what you see as a priority.' The principal was adamant about the importance of the mission, 'without that, the whole process would have been useless...I think that every single issue that arises has to be dealt with in light of our mission.'

4.5.6 Stakeholders' needs

Discussing the needs of the stakeholders, including the students and parents in the school, was seen to be a valuable exercise. Interviewee 3 felt that 'it is worthwhile... I've been here ten years now and you get to know the culture of the school and so on-you get to realize that there are other stakeholders also; and that they do have a role within the school'. Interviewee 5 maintained that 'people forget who the stakeholders are and how important it is to meet their needs...you have to know whose needs you are meeting'. Interviewee 12 stated that 'the two most important stakeholders we need to look at are the students and their parents. We need to include the parents much more in the running of the school... the involvement of the Students Council is also hugely important. They should have a say in things like the uniform, the lunch room, lockers, and things like that'. Interviewee 16 explained that looking at the needs of the different stakeholders is important to overcome the natural inclination to look at things from an insular perspective: 'I would always see the school from my perspective - it will be insular. I don't even see the school from the point of the maths teacher or geography teacher...so it was certainly valuable to put on a different hat'.

4.5.7 Evaluation tool

The participants in the pilot school used a SWOT analysis to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the school. 'I think it's always nice to hear about your strengths...identifying our strengths affirmed us as a staff,' asserted Interviewee 3. Interviewee 1 welcomed the process of reflection: 'I suppose it's a good place to start to get people thinking about things. It's always good to see where you are at and try and evaluated it in some way'. However, the limitation of using a SWOT analysis was recognized. Interviewee 1 pointed out that, 'schools are very insular places-they develop ways of doing things...It would be good to have even a statement of best practice so that you could argue the merits of that'. The idea of producing a quality assessment tool with quality statements and criteria was put to the interviewees. Interviewee 3 felt it would lead to a deeper analysis of the school, 'I think it would help discussion. Like an assessment, when you do a rubric, it helps you to identify what you need to do'. The principal of the pilot school agreed, 'it would be good to have some sort of quality statement and an analysis of the attainment of the quality standard-then at least we could write down what you are going to do.'

A more elaborate evaluation tool, with quality statements and criteria for the staff to assess the school against, was developed for the SSE in the Research School. This was seen as appropriate by most of those interviewed. Interviewee 8 asserted that 'a certain amount of leading or prompting is good. Leaving people with a blank page can be too abrupt an approach. It's good to have something to judge yourself against'. Interviewee 16 agreed, 'It made me look at the school in a more nuanced way; whether things were up and running or not'. One teacher felt that the tool wasn't detailed enough: 'I think there were certain areas that were not specific enough. Some bits were very broad like the Pastoral Care section was very broad compared to what we should actually have. It asked – *'Do you have a pastoral care policy?'* -I think it should be broken down more.' asserted Interviewee 17.

4.5.8 Creating a Vision of Success

The exercise where the participants drew their vision of success for the school received an enthusiastic response. Interviewee 8 felt it was 'a very powerful exercise'. He felt that drawing the picture tapped into people's subconscious and captured their

imagination: ‘That side of the brain might pick up what the logical side of the brain disregards’. Interviewee 6 found the exercise memorable, ‘I like words, but with the picture you have an image in your mind - I mean I can still remember the tree that we drew, the image was really, really good’.

Interviewee 1 felt that initially there was resistance to the activity of drawing pictures: ‘I suppose it wouldn’t be everybody’s cup of tea. Initially it was people thinking- ‘another two hours of Croke Park hours going on this!’ However, he felt that people warmed to the exercise-‘it was useful. I heard things that I wouldn’t have thought about. It was good to hear different people’s motivation and interests; you do get to know about other staff members’.

The exercise was seen as a useful way of identifying key themes for improvement. ‘I could see as we started collating the key points from the pictures, that we could see that this was in picture one, and also in picture three and four, so it must be important. It was a good way of picking out the overall themes,’ contended Interviewee 8. Most people commented on the similarity among the pictures. Interviewee 5 felt that ‘there were a few common ideas that we all had, which was good to see. Everybody did seem to be on the same page.’ The exercise generated a lot of energy on the day, ‘everybody got really into it. Because you were in small groups, everybody has to say what kind of a school they wanted. I remember on the day every one of us in the group did some little bit of it,’ recalled Interviewee 6. Interviewee 11 concluded that it was “one of the best activities of the entire school year because everyone had to make a physical contribution by way of drawing the picture. It was great because it wasn’t somebody else’s soundbite. I thought it was very, very interesting, the pictures were very similar in one way and very different in another, which shows you the value of a whole school approach to evaluation’.

4.5.9 Brainstorming and prioritizing

Shifting from the conceptual to the practical through a brainstorming exercise was seen as an appropriate approach to deciding what actions were needed to realize the vision of the school. ‘There are so many things you can do - getting a collective consensus and prioritising things-I think it’s a good way of effectively developing the school. Prioritising them and dividing up into work groups meant that we could get a lot of

practical things done,' contended Interviewee 3. Interviewee 16 liked the fact that there was a definite output from the day: 'there had to be something concrete at the end of it. I've been at events in the past where we had been very earnest and very serious about things on the day, - but then a few days later I would have no recollection of what happened'. Interviewee 5 also welcomed that the process was action orientated, 'there were obviously things that people felt needed changing in the school and instead of doing what we have often done before and just talk about doing something, stuff was actually done'. Interviewee 6 welcomed that the actions came from the teachers themselves: 'It was good that the teachers came up with the idea, and we focused on what we wanted. They were our ideas and that's what we felt we needed to improve on'.

4.5.10 The project groups

The research suggests that all of the groups achieved or exceeded their goals and that most groups in the school worked well together. Interviewee 3 asserted that, 'we worked really effectively; we arranged time to meet up; we distributed work equally. Within my group people were very engaged. It did encourage members of staff, it did give us task to do, it did give us a goal to aim for.' Some groups were well organized and worked well as a team: 'one of the girls did the typing, one of the girls said she would do the production, so we all had some job to do. It worked out well; we all did our tasks in our own time' explained Interviewee 2. However, he felt that there was a core group of people who did not engage fully in the process: 'I think it did change attitudes, but there was a small core of people who never do anything.' He did concede that these individuals did what they were asked, but would not volunteer to do anything extra, or instigate anything new. Interviewee 3 believed that these teachers did not see the running of the school as their concern, 'they might think that it's not their job to be a PR person for the school. They teach within the classroom and that's their main role.' The deputy principal felt that management should not become involved in the project teams as it interfered with the dynamics of the group, 'I was involved in one of the groups, and I think perhaps it wasn't a good thing, because people do tend to look at you to lead the group. So they wait for me to do something or tell them to do something-they should not really be waiting for me.'

There was general agreement that the optimum size of the groups should consist of four or five members. According to Interviewee 16, 'the group I was in had three, another one had five. I think the bigger groups had more dynamism in them because of the numbers. With just three when one person couldn't make it on a given day, it was difficult to get anything done. It's very hard with just two people to create the energy that gets work done'. On the other hand, Interviewee 10 felt that it was important not to have the groups too big, 'if you have a small team, people are going to take more responsibility for it. If it was a project with the whole staff it would be much easier to duck. People won't have ownership of it'. Interviewee 16 concluded that, 'the only suggestion I would have is that groups should be, if possible, four or five'.

4.5.11 The review process

There was agreement in the pilot school that the progress of the groups needed to be reviewed more regularly. Interviewee 1 believed that having someone to check the progress of the groups increased the accountability of the team members. 'There are people in the group who would take a backseat, and when they heard that you are coming back they were panicking and coming up to me and asking me what I had done!' The review provided an element of peer pressure to ensure that individuals delivered on their commitments. One teacher maintained that achieving the goals of the group gave people a sense of satisfaction, 'At the end of the year there was a great sense of achievement. If you had a list you can tick off the things that you did...I felt a good sense of achievement from the work we did' (Interviewee 6). Interviewee 14 felt that the review process was also important to give recognition for all the work that had been done throughout the year, 'I think especially the last day when we sat down and heard what people had done-that was good...so you realise that a lot of work was done.'

The majority of people felt that at least one more review meeting should have been held to help the groups to stay focused on their targets. Interviewee 18 maintained that her groups were guilty of procrastination, 'we kind of left things as a last-minute job. If you had held a meeting at the end of April, say, you'd have to have something done by April...I didn't feel there was enough push on us'. However, another teacher felt that there should not be too many review meetings: 'No I don't think we should have too many big reviews. It would be better if we had either you [researcher] or the deputy principal or the principal attending some of the meetings'. Interviewee 13 believed that

it might have been better had groups been asked to produce regular written updates to help sustained the momentum: 'Maybe more written reports- maybe quarterly or something like that; we would know exactly where we were'.

Many people were unhappy with the format of the final review meeting. Interviewee 12 felt that having the review process as part of a regular staff meeting undermined its importance, 'Self-evaluation is too important for us to give it a token time...it shouldn't be in an ordinary staff meeting-it should be above in the green carpeted area and been a stand-alone meeting.' People felt that the reporting process was too long and that people should have been given a time limit, 'you have five minutes to talk about it. There should be four minutes of talk and one minute to allow brief comments and that's it,' asserted Interviewee 12. Interviewee 15 insisted that the focus of the review should be on what was learnt. 'We don't need to know the details of conversations and all that,' she commented, '....we should have been focusing on what we did and what we learnt...It's okay if the project didn't go well, but what did you learn from it?' People were not always clear about what was expected of them for the review meetings, 'I think sometimes I wasn't fully aware of what was expected of me...on the agenda for a staff meeting would appear something about self-evaluation; and it wasn't that you were being caught on the hop, it's just that you may not have had the relevant material with you; a bit more notice would have been good,' asserted Interviewee 16.

4.5.12 Leadership

The findings suggest that SSE had an impact on leadership in the schools on a number of levels. Firstly, the principal had to alter his style of leadership. Before the SSE process, there was an attitude among the teaching staff that matters outside the classroom were the responsibility of management; now staff members were willing to take responsibility for them. 'The difference for me is that before this I would have to push and drive practically everything in the school,' asserted the principal. 'Now there are things happening in the place that I don't even know they're happening'. The principal felt that his involvement could lead to a less democratic process, 'The main thing is not to have me leading the process, because if I'm leading the process it will be encouraged to go in a certain direction.'

The principal of the pilot school admitted that this required a shift in control on his part but asserted, 'I have trust in the people who were doing the things; I hear about them at some stage they are not major things that I should worry about; but there are a lot of things going on'. He also admits that allowing the staff greater autonomy can be difficult for a principal: 'it was definitely a challenge to pull you down that hierarchical triangle and to flatten your leadership a little. The fact that they want you to be in amongst them, and wanted to say something to you-if a principal was not at a stage in their own life journey or in their career and life of the school, it might be threatening'. He cautions, 'you are opening a Pandora's Box and there's no point in opening it if you don't want what's inside.' The difficulties with giving staff greater responsibility are demonstrated by one anecdote told by the principal:

a group was publishing their newsletter and I wanted it done in a certain way...I felt directly responsible for something that goes directly out into the public; that it looks the right way...we were heading for that time of year when we needed an enrolment drive so there was no point in waiting. There was a bit of urgency there. School life is mediated by a calendar and you have to have your enrolment drive done on time.

However, he later recognized the benefits of giving the staff greater autonomy, as the next newsletter was, in many ways, better than the first one: 'I did the first, but the second one was done by other people in the school...it was great, you could even bring it along to the parents of children who have already enrolled'.

The findings suggest that the process strengthened the position of the post-holders in the school: 'I think it was a good idea to get post-holders to lead. As people retire, the status of the post has kind of dwindled in recent years-I would like more responsibility,' suggested Interviewee 3. She felt that the process allowed the post-holder to impact on areas outside their direct remit and, 'allowed us to work on areas we felt needed improving'. The process allowed leaders to emerge from the staff and individuals assumed responsibility where the group leader was not effective. 'There were other post holders who weren't as motivated, but there were natural leaders within each group who stepped up', asserted Interviewee 3.

The groups were allowed a great deal of discretion in how they conducted their affairs and most people embraced the greater autonomy afforded to them. According to Interviewee 8, 'they were allowed organise themselves, plan their own meeting times, follow their own route-follow their own course. I thought all that was helpful, rather

than setting everything in stone. You're dealing with adults, the more you give them responsibility and they're taking responsibility, it can bring out the best in them'. Interviewee 11 agreed with this stating, 'The fact that there was nobody standing over you saying, "you have to do this, or you have to do that", that was good. It was you and you have to take the responsibility yourself'. While the more open style of leadership was welcomed, the evidence indicates that the principal still had a role of ensuring that groups met their targets. For instance, Interviewee 2 observed that some groups were not as productive as others, 'I know the principal wanted to stay out of it because it was your thing, but a bit more checking how things were going was needed'.

The next section will discuss the quantitative and qualitative findings in light of what was revealed in the literature.

4.6 Discussion on Findings

The findings from the qualitative research will be compared with the findings from the quantitative research, and compared and contrasted with what was revealed in the literature review. The findings will be discussed under the following key themes:

1. Accountability
2. Development
3. Internal and external evaluation
4. Positives of the SSE process
5. Negatives of the SSE process
6. Positives of the WSE process
7. Negatives of the WSE process
8. leadership
9. Empowerment and team
10. Culture of improvement

4.6.1 Accountability

The research finds that both SSE and WSE can impact on the accountability of teachers in the school. WSE offer schools a way of ‘comparing themselves with other similar schools both locally and nationally’ (DES 1999; p9). This study found that teachers recognise the *bone fides* of the inspectors as ‘independent auditors’ with wide experience of standards and practices in other schools, and accept that the inspectorate can provide a yardstick for schools by which their performance may be measured. Inspectors were perceived to be independent of the school, and so were able to evaluate it ‘with fresh eyes’. Conway and Murphy (2013) are ‘seeking more information about the school system with greater expectations of it’ (p.17) and WSE was seen as a means of providing an objective assessment, providing parents with valuable information about the performance of teachers and the school. There is an acceptance among teachers that they are responsible for the quality of their work, and they agree with Vanhoof and Van Petegem’s (2007) assertion that they should be subjected to regular inspections. As was attested to by the principal the inspection helped identify best practice and illustrated what a quality standard looked like. This concurs with Fidler’s (1997) assertion that schools need to establish what the ‘right’ thing is before they can do it.

The process of SSE is also effective at ensuring accountability. The process involves schools setting clear targets, presenting these in report form, and putting in place processes to monitor the attainment of targets (DES Guidelines, 2012). This provides a transparent action plan that can be viewed and reviewed by all the school’s stakeholders. In the Reseach School, for instance, the literacy plan has been placed on the school website for all to see.

Darling-Hammond (2004) contended that evaluation involves more than checking and auditing, and that it should also contribute to the development of the school. The next section examines how WSE and SSE contribute to developing the school and teachers.

4.6.2 Development

The findings demonstrate that both WSE and SSE can contribute to the development of the school. This study supports Van Bruggen's (2005) belief that inspections provide a school with an audit and a baseline ,from which future improvements can be made. The inspection report provides a series of recommendations that are taken very seriously by the school. The staff found the recommendations to be fair and, for the most part, appropriate. Within one year of the inspection the vast majority of the recommendations were completed. One of the key advantages of WSE was its capacity to overcome the 'organisational blindness' identified by McBeath and Myers (2002). In the Research School, the failure to implement three of the top four recommendations of the inspectorate in the internal review suggests that there are political and social factors operating in the school that inhibit the school from addressing some issues.

The study demonstrates that SSE can be an extremely powerful catalyst for development. The experience in the Research School was that, when given the opportunity, staff demonstrated a strong commitment to bring about improvements in a wide range of issues in the school. Many projects related to teaching, learning and other aspects of the school were completed successfully. Teachers, such as Interviewee 9, demonstrated a high level of commitment to achieve the goals of the group, and invested heavily in terms of time and effort to bring the project to a successful outcome. The findings demonstrate that, when given the freedom to address issues of concern in the school, teachers have the capacity and motivation to tackle them effectively, echoing Pearson and Moomaw's (2005) assertion that when teachers are treated like professionals, they respond in a positive manner.

The findings indicate that SSE is an effective instrument in removing barriers to improvement in school. Heathfield (2008) asserts that the organization must create a work climate which fosters the ability and desire of employees to become empowered and to take responsibility for change. SSE helped create this climate in a number of ways. The process is rooted in the analysis undertaken by the staff, and the ideas for improvement came from the staff. As a result of their meaningful engagement, they were more committed to doing what was necessary to implement the changes. This supports Flynn's (1992) claim that including people in the change process gives them a better understanding of the rationale for change, and that they are therefore more likely

to implement the necessary changes. By discussing issues in the workshop, and fostering agreement among the staff in the workshops in relation to issues that needed addressing, the teachers were given the authority to carry out the improvements they wished to make. This had the added impact of lessening the influence of those in the school who might be reluctant to engage with the process and who might, otherwise, have had a dissenting effect on colleagues. It also ensured that people who wanted to become involved in the developmental process had access to the resources and support they needed. The research strongly supports the notion put forward by Chapman & Sammons (2013) that a ‘bottom-up’ approach to school is effective and that ‘locating power and control with those actually tasked with securing improvements’ increases the capacity of the school to take charge of its own growth.

Horton’s (2003) view that organisational learning is an important aspect of evaluation is substantiated in this study. There is evidence that the SSE is a process that facilitates organisational learning, providing individuals with learning experiences, through the sharing of ideas and by discussing matters of mutual interest. SSE provides the forum wherein the school-based conversations and problem-solving exercises advocated by Brown Easton (2008) might be addressed. The study also provides support for Philips’ (1996) assertion that individuals are more likely to regard change in a positive light if they associate it with learning.

While a direct link is difficult to establish, this study supports Wilkins’ (1999) assertion that self-evaluation can promote professional development; a greater interest in professional development was clearly witnessed in the Research School following on the commencement of the SSE process. How, precisely, this occurs is unclear; it may be that the general focus on improvement and the practice of reflection, which are central to SSE, may be key elements in inspiring teachers to develop their professional expertise. Jean McNiff (2002) suggests that evaluation should contribute to the process of reflection and self-review; this was a key feature of the SSE process in the school engaged in this research. While participation levels of Irish secondary teachers in CPD is well below average (OECD, 2009a), this research suggests that engagement with the SSE process may well contribute to the generation of a greater interest in, and commitment to, professional development.

4.6.3 External and internal evaluation

There is compelling evidence in this research to support Nevo's (2002) contention that internal and external evaluation can coexist and that both are needed to improve the school. Both types are needed as they are seen to be effective at evaluating different aspects of the school. For instance, there is a consensus that evaluating individual teachers in the classroom requires an independent assessor, one who can draw on his or her experience in other schools and provide valuable feedback. External evaluation is also seen as being effective in identifying the bigger issues in the school, and topics that might be neglected or overlooked in the internal evaluation. This study does not support the notion, advanced by Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2007), that external evaluation is a summative evaluation and is primarily concerned with determining results. This research indicates that valuable feedback was given to individual teachers and to the school, and that this was used to improve performance. This study also challenges Nevo's (2001) contention that the most important function of external evaluation is to motivate people and organizations to undertake internal evaluation, and is of the view that Nevo understates the value of external evaluation as an architect of development in its own right. This study also questions Chapman & Sammon's (2013) assertion that school improvement, and capacity to engage with it, is internally rather than externally driven. There is no doubt that the WSE gave the school the stimulus to address some areas that were ignored in the internal review.

Internal evaluation, on the other hand, evaluated the school in a more nuanced way and was able to identify issues that, though small, could be hugely important to the staff; these micro-issues might well be missed by an outsider. Nevo (2001, p.97) asserts that participants in the school are usually more familiar with the specific nature of the local school context. An example of this is where the WSE report overlooked the work of the school's committed pastoral care team, and made a bald recommendation that the school should have a pastoral care policy.

This study supports Sammon's (2006) contention that an internal evaluation should focus on both pedagogical and organisational issues. These findings suggest that pedagogical issues can be influenced by, and have consequences for, organisational issues. For instance, improving literacy and generating an interest in reading requires making the reading room available to students at lunchtime; this, in turn, necessitates

teacher supervision. Focusing on organisational factors does not undermine Hopkins' (2001) argument that *'authentic'* school improvement needs to drive down to the learning level, so that they impact directly on learning. Many factors impact on learning, not all of which are pedagogical. Interviewee 13 stated it well when she said, 'I don't think numeracy and literacy fell down because we did those other things.'

Nevo's (2001) belief that internal and external evaluation can impact on each other is only partly supported by this study. External evaluation broadened the scope of the internal evaluation and the recommendations by the inspectors in relation to aspects not considered by the schools own evaluation were reviewed and implemented. However, there is little evidence that internal evaluation impacted to any great extent on the external evaluation process as the inspectors showed little obvious interest in the process of the SSE, or the content of the SSE report. This may change as the SSE becomes more embedded in the school with the department's statement in the DES Guidelines (2012) that as schools engage in robust school self-evaluation processes the 'WSE will take increased account of the self-evaluation engaged in by schools' (p13). Furthermore, the WSE does not involve examining of SSE processes. One of the benefits of the newer WSE-MLL process is that they expect schools to produce a SSE report and say how it will impact on the development of the school (McNamara and O'Hara 2012). The inspectors merely look at the school development planning process.

4.6.4 Positive aspects of WSE

There is ample evidence to suggest that WSE was well received in the Research School, and, as described earlier, contributed positively to the improvement of the school. Ehren & Visscher's (2006) assertion that inspection contributes in a positive way to the quality of schools and education systems is validated in this study and some positive aspects of the WSE process were highlighted.

At a fundamental level, the process improved teachers' planning and preparation, and encouraged them to have their paperwork in order. There was general agreement among the teachers that the level of paperwork required by the inspectors was not too onerous, and that it was a legitimate expectation that teachers should have their schemes-of-work up-to-date. There is little evidence that teachers believed that WSE was a 'formal, bureaucratic

and time-consuming exercise' that yields little benefit for schools, as highlighted in the DES (1999) report. The receptiveness of the teachers in the school to WSE was a surprise to this researcher, in lieu of the negative attitude of teachers towards WSE highlighted in the literature review (Döbert 2004; Datnow et al. 2000; and Leithwood et al. 2000). Nevo's (2002) contention that schools with experience in self-evaluation have a greater chance of adopting a constructive attitude in relation to school audits may explain the finding.

While the DES Guidelines (2012) state that SSE is a 'collaborative, inclusive and reflective process' (p.12), this research suggests that WSE is also inclusive and collaborative and encourages reflection. It is inclusive by virtue of the fact that all stakeholders- from the Board of Management, to the principal and all the staff - are subject to scrutiny. Furthermore, the parents and students played a significant role in the evaluation process. All the parents and students were surveyed for their opinions, and a random selection of students and parents from the Parents' Council were interviewed. The process is collaborative in that there was a lot of sharing of ideas and opinions among teachers as they worked together to come to an understanding of inspectors' expectations. The process is reflective in that WSE put the spotlight on teachers' classroom practices and encouraged them to examine every aspect of their teaching in preparation for the inspection.

It might be argued that the desire to meet the inspectors' expectations is an example of WSE creating a 'culture of compliance' among teachers at the expense of innovation (Datnow et al. 2000, Leithwood et al. 2000). There is no doubt that the inspectors have very definite criteria by which they assess class teaching. However, this did not constrain teachers to the extent that it reduces their own intrinsic motivation to teach or that it stifled their innovation, as has been suggested by Leithwood et al. (2000).

There was little evidence that WSE damaged the morale of teachers in the school, contrary to the findings of some researchers (MacBeath's, 2006; Döbert, 2004). It could be argued, indeed, that teachers' morale and confidence were enhanced by the process, as most of the teachers received affirmation and valuable feedback from the inspectors. The OECD (2007) assessment that the Irish system is 'positive, affirming and developmental rather than punitive or negative' (p410), is supported by this study.

4.6.5 Negative aspects of WSE

This study supports the findings of many other researchers (Gaertner et al. 2009; De Wolf & Janssens 2007) who conclude that the WSE is a very stressful process for school managers and teachers. Teachers, including this researcher, were anxious to perform well for the inspectors, and could undoubtedly be accused of “putting on a show” for the inspectors. However, it could be counter-argued that the process of preparing for the inspection is a learning process in itself and raises awareness of what constitutes quality teaching. From the time the inspection was announced, to the time the report was published, the principal and deputy principal devoted a huge amount of time and energy ensuring that policies and paperwork were in order. The deputy principal highlighted the explaining and justifying of all schools policies and practices to the inspectors as the most stressful aspect of the process for him.

The research supports Nevo’s (2002) findings that, as inspectors operate from a ‘criterion-orientated frame of reference’, the local perspective is sometimes lost. This is in evidence in relation to their assessment of the Pastoral Care system in the school and the Care Room system. The inspectors’ dismissal of the disciplinary system in the school, the Care Room system, particularly upset the staff. The inspectors rejected this system outright as being of little or no value ; this was viewed as unbalanced and unfair by the staff. Teachers feel that inspectors should assess the structures and systems in a school on their own merits.

While the inspectors’ recommendations were accepted, the published report was strongly contested by the school. The disagreement that ensued between the school and the inspectors illustrates the pressure placed on the inspectors to be guarded in the tone and tenor of their language when compiling a school report. It also illustrates the pressure and anxiety under which principals operate, leading them to adopting a defensive attitude towards negative aspects appearing in the report (McNamara and O’Hara, 2008). It also explains why the DES’s (1999) own study admitted that for ‘political’ reasons and due to the sensitivities involved, reports tended to be very general, superficial and bland.”

The findings also corroborate McNamara and O’Hara’s (2008) assertion that the relationship between school communities and inspectorates should be based on dialogue rather than conflict. The research reveals that teachers want a mature, professional relationship with the inspectorate, with inspectors acting more as mentors helping them to improve, than as moderators identifying faults and weaknesses. Teachers support

Kinshner's (2000) idea of WSE initiating a dialogue between the teacher and the inspector on issues such as the impact of curricula on recipients. As a result of observing the inspectors at close quarters, this researcher believes that inspectors share this aspiration, but feels that they are stifled by time constraints and by uncertainty in relation to how to balance the dual function of development and accountability.

4.6.6 Positive aspects of SSE

Much has already been said about the positive aspects of SSE in the earlier discussion on accountability and development. The main findings relating to the SSE process is that the contention of the department that SSE was 'a collaborative, inclusive, and reflective process' (DES Guidelines 2012) was sustained in this case study. Leithwood et al's, (2001) assertion that internal monitoring systems and frameworks play a vital role in informing the strategic direction of the school was certainly an outcome of this process. The discussion on the mission and stakeholders' needs was welcomed by the teachers who felt that it gave them new insights on the school and reminded them of the broader picture. This facilitated the integration of SSE into the existing way of thinking in the school as recommended by Vanhoof and VanPetegem (2012). A recommendation by the inspectors that the SSE should be integrated into the DEIS plan in the school was taken on board and is currently being implemented. This concurs with Vanhoof and VanPetegem 's(2012) other recommendation that SSE should also be integrated into the school's existing structures. Creating the vision of the kind of school the teachers wished to develop through SSE is seen as a powerful exercise as it generated a compelling milestone for teachers to aim for (Cochlan and Brannick, 2008).

The findings suggest that Fullan's (2006) assertion that change in an organisation must be supported is borne out in this study. When a definite change structure is provided, and when the stakeholders feel that there is a framework of support in place, they were willing to commit to carrying out the changes needed.

4.6.7 Negative aspects of SSE

The findings reveal that not everyone in the school was positive towards the SSE process. There was a small cohort of teachers who felt that the workshop was a waste of time, and were reluctant performers in the groups. These people were described as being

older and more experienced teachers who were perhaps less open to change (Interviewee 1). This may be a stereotype view of those who are resistant to change as it has to be noted that many of the most ardent supporters of the SSE process were older and experienced teachers who have been advocating change for some time. Kunze et al. (2013) challenge the common stereotype that older workers are less able to cope with change. In fact, they found that older employees were slightly less resistant to change as they had developed better coping strategies over the years, and were better able to fit the changes into the company's long term strategies.

The biggest challenge for those entrusted with developing SSE is the issue of gathering and analysing data. While the Guide (2012) recommends that schools gather qualitative information as well, all the training and information on the website is on how to gather quantitative data. The concern of this researcher is that this could lead schools to adopt a very positivist approach to SSE, and the opportunity to develop schools as learning organisations where teachers can engage in discussions on teaching and learning and all matters related to school improvement, may be lost. Very little hard empirical evidence on the schools performance is produced by the school as yet. The school has access to the data on national averages for each subject and is in the process of comparing them to their own results. No data is available for DEIS schools which would be more applicable to the research school than national averages. Furthermore, comparing subject results with national averages makes no attempt to assess the value added by the school to the performance of the student. This all tallies with McNamara and O'Hara (2012) who challenge the assumption that schools have the skills and resources to gather evidence and make judgements about the schools performance.

The quality of the discourse generated in this study, and the powerful impact it made on the participants, indicate that a qualitative approach is the appropriate approach to take when carrying out SSE. The hard data is needed to add credibility to the discussion and to monitor progress but the real benefit is in the quality of the discourse between colleagues in the school. McNamara and O'Hara (2008) insist that evaluation is about 'people working together collaboratively towards a common understanding of personal and interpersonal processes' (McNamara and O'Hara 2008, p.20).

4.6.8 Leadership

This study indicates that the leadership of the principal is crucial to the success of the SSE process and the findings provide interesting insight into exactly what form this leadership should take. In an effort to empower the staff, the principal reduced his own leadership role yet found it difficult to increase the autonomy of the staff. Ward (1996) asks the question a principal might reasonably ask, 'How can I give up control when I am accountable for the results? How can I give greater decision making authority to employees, yet ensure the results are of good quality and are consistent with corporate objectives?' (p21). To address these fears Ward (1996) proposes a new role of mentor and coach for the leader. He recommends that principals take an active role in mentoring and coaching the staff. The benefit of this for the Research School would be that the principal could be confident that the staff understood their role while it would also allow him monitor the progress of the groups without micro-managing them.

The study indicates that there was a deficit in leadership in some cases as not all the groups worked well together. Some individuals did very little and left the bulk of the work to a few people. While people liked the autonomy they were given to run their own group, the realisation that they would have to deal with reluctant performers was a salutary lesson in leadership. A number of strategies emerged from the research that ensured accountability within the groups. Firstly, the review process provided an element of peer pressure, where people did not want to be seen to have failed to meet their objectives. Secondly, setting targets, having a clear vision of the goals it wanted to achieve, and delegating specific tasks to individuals, helped keep the group focused. Thirdly, the leadership of the principal is seen as a key factor in managing the groups. While the findings indicate that management should not become directly involved in the running of the group, they still had a role to play in monitoring progress, in recognising achievement, and in ensuring objectives were met.

The findings suggest that the process has the potential to provide leadership opportunities for those who wish to adopt a leadership role. Harris (2004) asserts that effective leaders provide leadership opportunities for other in the SSE process. In the pilot school the position of some post-holders was strengthened. They were given a position of authority that perhaps they were not given in the past as the status of the post-holder has been undermined in recent years by the government's embargo on

promotions. Not all post-holders welcomed this additional responsibility as it meant more work for them. Where there was a deficit of leadership in a group someone invariably assumed a leadership role and achieved ensured that the goals of the group were met. This corresponds with Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) assertion that successful SSE requires the sharing of leadership and a partnership approach.

4.6.9 Empowerment and Team

The findings indicate that the staff's level of empowerment rose throughout the process. A distinct change in mindset was reported with many of the traits identified by Spreitzers (1997) as being dimensions of psychological empowerment being displayed. These include the feelings that their role is meaningful, and that they can make an impact on the school. The survey showed that Psychological Empowerment significantly increased from 7.97 to 8.56, and the dimensions of meaning and impact (statements 2, 4 and 5) all increased over the process. The staffs feeling of self-determination increased as people were allowed manage the affairs of their own group, and they were responsible for their own tasks. According to Spreitzer, self-determination is an important dimension of Psychological Empowerment. The level of autonomy increased from 7.73 to 8.03 over the course of the process and people gradually began to see they had the scope and authority to improve the school. Pellet's (2008) asserted that people become more empowered when they are allowed to make their own decisions. Most importantly, the management in the school began to see that teachers could be trusted to complete projects in a timely and efficient manner.

One outcome of increasing psychological empowerment of the staff was that it encouraged people to behave in an autonomous way. More people were willing to initiate projects and seek out areas that needed improvement. There is evidence of what Vanhoof and VanPetegem (2012) refer to as an 'improvement culture' in the school. They define an improvement culture as the extent to which problems and weak points which emerge during the self-evaluation are seen as opportunities or challenges. During the process most staff members went from being passive performers to being proactive, fully engaged, members of the school community. Bouderais et al. (2009) identified people taking more initiative; accept more responsibility; making a greater effort to improve the school and collaborating effectively, as being examples of Behavioural Empowerment. People were willing to take the initiative and to take responsibility for

achieving objectives. Taking responsibility for an issue involves more than just being accountable; it involves people making an emotional commitment to the project (Pinchot and Pinchot, 1993). They have a sense of pride when they achieve something and are disappointed when they fail. This emotional connection to improving the school was, perhaps, the most striking impact of the entire SSE process.

Miller and Monge (1995) found that the greater the empowerment levels in an organisation, the higher the internal work motivation, the higher the job satisfaction, the greater the job involvement, and the more involvement beyond the defined job of the individual. This study found both quantitative and qualitative evidence of all these dimensions in the Research School.

The findings show that the level of collaboration and teamwork between the staff increased significantly over the duration of the SSE process. The survey shows that the dimension of *Team* increased significantly from 7.71 to 8.00. The levels of trust between colleagues also increased with the response to the statement '*There is a good level of trust between individuals in the school*' going up from 6.97 to 7.46. Most groups worked well and displayed a level of teamwork that is not normally in evidence in schools, with people working together towards a common goal. The groups were deemed to be well capable of managing their own affairs. Muller (2014) asserts that, 'there is this rising recognition that teams can function to monitor individuals more effectively than managers can control them. The teams function as a social unit; you don't need to hand-hold as much'.

Being part of a team gave people a sense of belonging, and helped to build strong relationships with their colleagues. Lawrence and Nohria (2002) suggest that key driver of employee engagement is the needs to belong to something bigger than oneself and to feel you are part of something successful. The benefits of being part of a team are well illustrated by Senge (1990):

When you ask people about what it is like being part of a great team, what is most striking is the meaningfulness of the experience. People talk about being part of something larger than themselves; of being connected, of being generative (p13).

The research indicates that having small teams of four or five is the optimum size for an effective workgroup. Larger groups make it harder for everyone to contribute in

discussions, and allow people to hide, while too small a group makes it difficult to create the dynamics and energy that is required to get things done. Mueller (2014) suggests that over five people in a group leads to diminishing motivation, ‘after the fifth person, you look for cliques. And the number of people who speak at any one time? That’s harder to manage in a group of five or more.’

4.6.10 Culture of improvement

The findings show that SSE changed the culture of the school into a much more inclusive and open organisation and created an unusually high level of engagement among the staff. It brought all the staff in the school together and generated a discussion on matters related to teaching and learning and many areas of school improvement. The informal format of the workshops encouraged people who would not normally speak at staff meetings to give their opinion on a wide range of issues. The indications are that the process creates a learning environment as teachers learn from one another by sharing ideas, solving problems together and working with each other in the groups. Staff welcomed the opportunity to discuss broader issues such as mission, vision and stakeholders needs, as it allowed them to obtain insights into what other people in the organisation were thinking. McNamara and O’Hara’s (2008, p.20) construct of evaluation as people engaging in a dialogue on aspects of the school and education – in contrast to an ‘instrumental’ paradigm where people are more concerned with ‘what works’- resonates with the experience of this researcher. For instance, Interviewee 15’s comment that the review process was more about what the staff learnt than whether they achieved their goals or not, demonstrates an understanding that this process provides the staff with an excellent opportunity to learn.

A meaningful review process helps to create a climate of trust between the principal and the teacher that is crucial for SSE to flourish. Chapman & Sammons (2013) asserted that ‘strong professional relations based on trust are vital if school leaders are to create a climate ‘where risk taking and collaboration support a culture of openness at all levels within the organisation’ (p.30).

Trying to elicit the reason for the shift in the culture of the school is difficult as the process was both gradual and multi-dimensional. A number of possible reasons shine through the findings. The initial workshop, where the mission and vision of the school were discussed, established a need for change. It operated similar to the pre-step in

action research (Coughlan and Brannick, 2008), where the urgency required to change is generated. Ismail et al. (2006) emphasise that individuals who have belief in the organisation's vision and mission demonstrate stronger organisational commitment. Working on the vision of the school allowed people to create a compelling image of the type of school that they desired; this provided a source inspiration for the staff. Coughlan and Brannick (2008) suggest that working on a desired future is an important way of harnessing the political elements within the system and of building a consensus. Rooting the improvement process in the staff's own analysis of what was required, meant that most staff members were more committed and motivated to carry out the improvements that were needed (Flynn, 1992). Finally, linking the SSE to the aim of improving the school resonated with the teachers who believed that this could bring benefits to the school and the pupils. Nevo (2002) and Sheerens (2002) emphasised the need to link the SSE with that of ongoing improvement rather than seeing it as an exercise in accountability.

The shift in culture and mindset was a gradual process; when people saw real improvements taking place around them, and felt that they could impact on the school in a positive way, they were willing to commit to the improvement process. This supports Chapman and Sammons (2013) view that, 'school improvement is a process, not an event' (p.8). It takes time for individuals to realise that they can make an impact, and it takes time for the impact to be realised.

The changes in culture, empowerment levels and team, led to a greater sense of job satisfaction among the staff in the school. The dimension of *Job Satisfaction* in the empowerment survey increased from a low 6.83 to 7.68. Interviews with the participants corroborated this increase in satisfaction, with teachers welcoming the feedback and the recognition that people were given on achieving their goals.

4.7 Summary

Chapter four presented the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative research carried out on the SSE and WSE processes in the school. The discussion on the findings covered a wide-ranging agenda of issues that surround the topic of school evaluation. Evaluation is a complex, multi-dimensional issue that is a process rather than a destination. The findings suggest that when management involve staff in the running of the school and give them the autonomy and support needed, they have the capacity and motivation to bring about real improvements. The process must be gradual and led by a strong and democratic leadership. The leadership must create the culture and climate that supports the improvement. The WSE that took place in the school was analysed and discussed from the perspective of the school staff. The key issues around the process, and the impact it had on the school were explored. The conclusions of the research and some of these conditions will be addressed in chapter five.

Chapter five

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The conclusions drawn from this study derive from the interpretation of the findings from the questionnaires, the interviews, the focus groups, the documents and the literature review, and they form the basis for the recommendations provided. Some aspects that the researcher feels require further research are identified. Finally, an overall conclusion is given highlighting insights the researcher has gained into school evaluation

5.2 Conclusions

1. School evaluation can satisfy the accountability requirements of the stakeholders of the school, and simultaneously help to improve and develop the school. This can be achieved through a blend of internal and external evaluation. Both types of evaluation are needed as they impact on the school in different ways. External evaluation ensures accountability by benchmarking the performance of the school against other, similar-type schools; by validating that the quality of education being provided is of a high standard; and by casting a light on aspects of the school that need improving. Internal evaluation can also ensure accountability, by means of establishing transparent goals that can be reviewed by stakeholders; by creating high-performing teams who are responsible for implementing change; and by developing an SSE report that provides a roadmap for the future development of the school.
2. Internal evaluation helps to improve the school through harnessing the talent and experiences of all the staff and focusing their attention on areas that need improvement. It can also remove barriers that exist in the school by creating an improvement climate that empowers the staff to make the changes needed. Most importantly, it serves to quell the influence of those in the school who would seek to impede the improvement effort.

3. External evaluation supports development by broadening the perspective of the school, achieved by highlighting best practice in other schools. It can also be a catalyst for change by providing the impetus for the school to carry out the necessary improvements.
4. The creation of knowledge (Chelimsky, 1997) was an important outcome of the evaluation process in the school. Evaluation, by its nature, requires review and reflection. Both internal and external evaluation caused teachers to reflect on their own and on the school performance, although they prompted people to reflect on different things. Paradoxically, internal evaluation caused individuals to focus outwardly and reflect on the wider school and on how it could be improved, while external evaluation encouraged more introspection, and a willingness to reflect more about their own teaching performance.
5. Engaging in evaluation put a focus on learning and development, and created a learning environment in the school. Information gathered during the SSE process by means of data gathering, discussion, and by sharing experiences with others in the group, provided teachers with a deeper understanding of the school and of the teaching and learning that took place there. This emphasis on learning seemed to have inspired more teachers to engage in professional development than is the norm.
6. The research shows that both internal and external evaluations are required to improve the school, as they evaluate different aspects of the school. External evaluation is effective at reviewing aspects of the school's performance that internal evaluation is less well suited for. For instance, it is felt that external evaluation is needed to assess the quality of teaching in the school.
7. There is evidence of aspects in the school that were overlooked by the internal evaluation, and the 'organisational blindness' referred to by McBeath & Myers (2002) was certainly a feature of the SSE process in the school. The research reveals that there are social and political factors that inhibit the evaluation of some aspects of the schools. The evidence suggests that some systems are so ingrained and embedded in the fabric of the school that they are overlooked in an internal review. It is clear that external evaluation is needed to ensure that all areas of the school come under scrutiny.
8. On the other hand, the research highlights that inspectors may also have 'blind spots'; their rigid adherence to a criterion-orientated frame of reference caused

some very worthwhile initiatives in the school to be discounted. Inspectors seemed to focus on a narrow checklisting of items, rather than evaluating what was actually happening in the school.

9. Internal evaluation is seen as providing a more nuanced assessment of the school. Internal stakeholders, including teachers, SNAs, parents and students have a deep understanding of the impact and practicalities of school policies and practices. The SSE process provided a framework which allowed people to voice their opinions and to share their perspective with others in the school. The evidence reveals that creating this forum had a powerful impact on the individuals in the school, especially on those who might not usually be vocal at staff and group meetings.
10. This study rejects the narrow focus of SSE recommended by the DES. It is a strong conclusion of this study that an internal evaluation should address both organisational and pedagogical issues. Pedagogical issues can often be affected by organisational ones; impediments to teaching and learning often relate to factors such as a lack of resources, time or manpower. This study emphatically demonstrates that allowing the themes and issues to emerge from the staff's own evaluation, getting the staff to create a vision of success for the school, and developing plans that are aligned with the overall strategic direction of the school, creates the energy and commitment needed to successfully implement improvement programmes.
11. The findings strongly suggest that schools are amenable to evaluation processes, provided they can see a benefit to the school, and can see a direct link between the evaluation and school improvement. WSE, for instance, was remarkably well received in the school. Teachers showed little resistance to being held accountable to an external evaluator, provided they believed that the intention of the inspector was to help them improve. The indications are that the school's involvement in SSE helped to create a more positive attitude towards evaluation and linked the latter to the concept of learning and developing.
12. There is no indication that WSE, as it was constituted in the school undermined or damaged the morale of teachers. On the contrary, the evidence points to it increasing the morale of teachers, providing feedback and recognition that they so seldom receive.
13. The findings strongly suggest that teachers want a new and more democratic relationship with inspectors. Teachers are receptive to constructive feedback from

inspectors who they believe can help them improve their performance as teachers. Teachers want a professional relationship with the inspectors, one which facilitates them in engaging in a dialogue on matters relating to teaching and learning, and improving outcomes for their students.

14. The SSE process in the school had a profound effect on the culture of the school and created a climate of openness and trust among the staff and management. This openness and trust contributed to an increase in the empowerment levels of the staff that began taking a much more proactive role in the running of the school. The staff was allowed greater autonomy to carry out the changes they felt were needed to improve the school. The process also increased the level of teamwork in the school, and this provided a support network for teachers to engage in the improvement effort. This change in culture was a gradual process as people needed to see that they were not alone in the improvement effort and that the improvements that were being made were having an impact.
15. The research reveals that the leadership of the principal is crucial to the success of the SSE process. The findings suggest that principals are unsure of the type of leadership that is needed to support the process and that they are torn between a number of conflicting responses. They want to allow staff greater autonomy in making changes to improve the school but are very aware that, as principal, they are ultimately responsible for all initiatives that emanate from the staff's deliberations. They acknowledge the benefits of the staff and teams having discretion to manage their particular projects; they are uncertain, however, as to the level of involvement they themselves should have in the improvement process.
16. The findings suggest that principals should adopt a more coaching style of leadership and act as mentors to the group leaders, fostering them in their leadership. This will raise the level of trust and help develop strong professional relationships with the staff and also ensure that the groups are more likely to achieve their goals.
17. SSE process allows leaders to emerge at every level in the school. Leadership opportunities were provided for group members, who are given responsibility for specific aspects of the projects, and also for group leaders who are accountable for ensuring that the group performs as a team and achieves its objectives. The findings

show that most teachers welcomed this opportunity to lead and that they embraced the opportunity to contribute in a positive way to the improvement of the school.

18. The process of SSE demands a great deal of work and expertise from the coordinator. The coordinator can be either an outsider with facilitation skills or someone from inside the organisation with the required competencies. The coordinator should not try to do the job on his or her own, but rather should gather a coalition of interested parties to help steer the process. As well as training in facilitation, the facilitator and/ or coordinator require training in the programme outline, in project management and in data gathering, analysis and interpretation.
19. The findings, however, also show that SSE is not for everyone; some teachers are most comfortable working solely in the confines of their own classroom. Research in other countries, Iceland for instance, suggests that participation in the improvement projects should be voluntary. In this study there were enough staff members who wanted the school to improve and who were willing to do the work necessary to bring about improvements. The present study concludes that once such a critical mass of support exists, meaningful engagement with the SSE process is both feasible and rewarding.
20. One of the most important aspects of the SSE was its capacity, for the vast majority of stakeholders in the school, to ignite the intrinsic motivation to engage in the change process and to work together towards the common goal of improving the quality of education provision in the school. The conclusion of this research is that the dual approach adopted by the DES in Ireland of robust School Self-evaluation coupled with light touch Whole School Evaluation is a prudent approach and has the potential to improve the quality of educational provision in schools. To do this a number of adjustments should be made to the system as it is gradually emerging. Some of these changes are addressed in the recommendations below.

5.3 Recommendations

1. There is a need for a closer alignment between the SSE process and the overall development plan for the school. The process needs to incorporate a vision of success for the self-evaluation plan and describe what the school will look like if the plan is successful. The vision of success will provide the incentive and inspiration needed to motivate staff to carry out the changes necessary for achieving the goals of the plan.
2. The evaluation carried out by the staff should initially address all areas of the school. People need to feel that the evaluation is thorough and that the process addresses their own concerns. Once a comprehensive evaluation is completed, the school can then prioritize areas for attention and can drill down into issues such as literacy and numeracy. This study shows that the more closely the SSE plan is linked to the improvement of the school and the enhancement of student outcomes, the more teachers will engage in the process.
3. There is a need to adopt a more qualitative approach to the gathering of information on the performance of the school. The current approach is too focused on setting targets and gathering quantitative data. While an evidence-based process is laudable, the most significant aspect of SSE for this researcher is the engagement of teachers in a discourse on matters related to the quality of teaching and learning that is provided in the school.
4. An important outcome of SSE is that it generates an interest in professional development. The school must harness this appeal for learning and improvement and support teachers' development. This should be more than a narrow focus on in-service courses provided by the PDST; it should include financial support for post-graduate education, in-house training provided by teachers with particular expertise, and the invitation to external educators to provide courses in the school on matters that are deemed important by the staff.
5. The nature of the leadership provided by the principal needs to change in order support the SSE process in an appropriate manner. Principals need to adopt a more democratic and empowering leadership, a leadership that creates a climate where people feel safe to take the initiative and are not afraid of making mistakes. This can be done by adopting a coaching style of leadership where they can facilitate individuals to achieve their goals.

6. As regards WSE, there is a need for a new relationship to develop between the inspectorate and the schools. Indications are that the dual approach adopted by the department, external evaluation coupled with internal school review, is an appropriate approach. The findings from this study indicate that teachers desire a more equitable and open relationship with the inspectors, and are receptive to positive critical feedback on their teaching. The inspectorate should pilot a number of evaluations where the emphasis is on observing, mentoring and coaching teachers rather than reviewing documents. If the full potential of the outside moderator is to be harnessed it must be done as close to where teaching and learning occurs; in the classroom.
7. SSE has little chance of success unless a team of coordinators are trained in facilitation and provided with the numerous other skills needed to implement an effective SSE process such as team-building, project management and data management. These coordinators can be outside facilitators or insiders such as this researcher. The important thing is that they have the required expertise to facilitate a dynamic and effective SSE process that engages the staff and supports the change effort.

5.4 Concluding remarks

To summarise, the findings from this study, together with the recommendations that derive from the findings, must be interpreted in the cautionary light of the limited scope of the study, arising from the small size of the survey and the research methods used; these clearly limit the potential to extrapolate the results to wider contexts. It is to be hoped that this research will, nevertheless, contribute to a general understanding of school evaluation in Ireland, and be a spur to further research. The dynamic at work in schools is a multi-faceted one, increasingly shifting and evolving. There are many conflicting forces at play, exacerbated by changes in teaching methods and modes of assessment. It is the strong opinion of this researcher that much more class-based research of this or similar type is needed to tease out the complexities, difficulties and opportunities of school evaluation. From a synergy of such research, Irish schools will be much better placed to inaugurate effective and practicable methods of evaluation, sensitive to the needs and expectations of all stakeholders in education.

5.5 Further Research

1. This study sought to gain deep insights into the processes of SSE and WSE in a post-primary school. One of the limitations of the study was that an evaluation of the impact of the processes on student outcomes was beyond the scope of the research. A very worthwhile follow-up study to this research would be a longitudinal study to evaluate the impact of the process on the performance of the students over a number of years.
2. The small size of this study enabled the researcher to gain deep insights into the processes of SSE and WSE in a single post-primary school. However, it would be valuable to carry out the research across a greater number of schools as this would strengthen the validity of the findings. It would allow stronger inferences to be drawn from the conclusions and increase the capacity to make generalisations from the findings.
3. This research recommends that a more equitable relationship needs to develop between the inspectorate and schools. A useful research for the inspectorate would be to run a pilot study in a number of schools where the inspectors take time to build a stronger relationship with the teachers, and mentor and coach them on how to improve their classroom performance. While the focus would be on development, it would be interesting to learn if the accountability requirement of stakeholders could still be satisfied.

5.6 Summary

The literature and the research conclusions support the hypothesis that evaluation can bring about improvements to the quality of education provision in a post-primary school. SSE, in particular, can result in management and staff working as partners in the school to improve the outcomes for the students in the school. SSE helps to develop a culture of openness and trust that creates the climate where staff takes ownership of the development of the school. It resulted in the elevation of empowerment levels of the staff, and increased teamwork and collaboration among staff members. The WSE process helps focus teachers their minds on improving their performance in the classroom, as well as satisfying the accountability requirements of stakeholders. Whether this actually lead to an improvement in student outcomes is beyond the scope of this study, as it will take time for the results of the processes to become apparent.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Empowerment Survey

Teachers Empowerment Survey Template

Rating from 1 to 10
(1 -6.9 low/ 7-7.9 neutral/ 8-10 high)

(1-10)

Psychological empowerment

1.	I am proud of my job in the school	
2.	I make a meaningful contribution to the school's success	
3.	The work I do correspond well to my competencies	
4.	The work I do makes a difference here	
5.	I know how my role contributes to the success of the school	
6.	This is the kind of job in which I can feel a sense of accomplishment	
7.	I see which competencies I need to develop in my job	
8.	I feel I am developing professionally in my job	
9.	I understand how to reach the goals in my job	
10.	I understand clearly my priorities	

Autonomy

11.	I have the right level of autonomy to carry out my work successfully	
12.	I'm enough involved into decisions that affect my work	
13.	Suggestions I make are seriously considered	
14.	I have the right level of support from others to carry out my job successfully	
15.	My manager has the right level of autonomy to support me in my job	

Teamwork

16.	I consider myself part of a team	
17.	If there is a problem, we work together to solve it	
18.	The school management works well as a team	
19.	There is a good level of trust between individuals in the school	
20.	If I make a mistake I have the support of my manager	
21.	There is an openness and trust between my manager and I	

Job Satisfaction

22.	Overall, I am satisfied with the recognition I receive for doing a good job	
23.	I feel valued as an employee	
24.	I receive feedback about my job performance	
25.	I have enough information on long terms goals and strategies of the school	

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Interview schedule

- What was your overall impression of the SSE process?
- What did you like about the process?
- What did you not like?
- What was your impression of the initial workshop?
 - Mission?
 - Stakeholders needs?
 - Evaluation tool?
 - Vision?
 - Brainstorming?
 - Prioritising?
 - The action planning?
- How did your group operate?
 - What were the problems?
 - What was good?
 - What did you achieve?
 - How was the team lead?
 - What support did you need or get?
- What is your view on the review process?
- Do you think the evaluation should have a broad or narrow focus?
- Do you think teachers can evaluate their own processes?
- What impact did the process have on the school?
- What impact did it have on yourself/ your teaching?
- How did you find the WSE process?
- What did you like?
- What did you not like?
- How did you find the inspectors?
- How did your own inspection go?
- What preparation did you do for the WSE?
- Did you think the inspectors were fair to the school?
- Were their recommendation fair and useful?
- What did you think of the presentation of the report?
- What impact did the WSE have on the school?
- Is the WSE a good way of improving the school?

Anything else

Thank you

Appendix C: Self-Evaluation Proposal

Self-Evaluation Proposal

Aims of the project:

To initiate a self-evaluation programme in the school with a view to bringing about improvements in school practices

Objectives:

1. To analyse the needs of the stakeholders
2. To create a vision of the kind of school that will meet the needs of all the stakeholders of the school
3. To devise strategies to realize the vision
4. To implement an action plan to realize the vision
5. To monitor and review the action plan

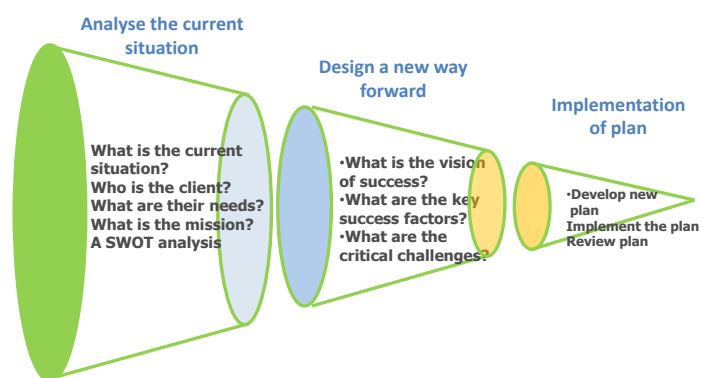
The development plan

Rationale behind the planning process

The planning process is based around the Solution Cone Methodology which is a three step process of analysis, vision and planning and action. The process will be a continuous cycle of action, review and planning, which will hopefully bring about sustained improvement to the school.

Figure 1

Rationale behind the planning process



How do we get there?

Where do we want to go?

Where are we now?

STEP 1: ANALYSE THE CURRENT SITUATION

Where are we now?

The first step is to analyse the current situation in the school. The analysis should be focused on the needs of all the stakeholders; pupils, parents, staff, Board of Management, the DES. A number of key questions need to be answered at this stage:

- Who are the stakeholders?
- What are their needs?
- What is our mission?
- Evaluate the criteria in relation to quality standards
- What are our strengths and weaknesses? A SWOT analysis (where are we meeting the needs of the stakeholders and where could we improve?)
- How do we operate? How could we work more effectively together?

STEP2: WHAT IS THE VISION OF SUCCESS

What kind of a school do we want to create?

From the last section, it will be clear what areas in the school are strong and what needs improving. From this, create a vision of what success for the organisation will look like.

STEP 3: CREATE THE ACTION PLAN

How will we get there?

Examine the evaluation sheets to look for gaps or areas needing. The next step is to brainstorm all the things that could help the organisation achieve the vision. At this stage the aim is to capture as many ideas as possible no matter how trivial or off-the-wall they may seem. Once these have been identified they can be grouped into different categories and prioritised. These are the **Critical Challenges**. These are then the projects that will be worked on to achieve the vision. An individual is appointed to lead a Project Team (3 or 4 people) to drive each project. Each project team prepares a simple plan with targets and practical steps that will achieve the targets.

Figure 2: From vision to reality



- The groups set out the nature, scope and objectives of the project.
- The objectives should be SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed). .
- The groups should then set milestones for the project. Each milestone should be identified and timed
- Things that might help or hinder the success of the project should be identified and discussed

The plan will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis

Programme outline

Step 1

A survey will be carried out in the school to assess the empowerment levels of the staff. A reported output of self-evaluation in other studies is an increase in teacher empowerment levels. Raising empowerment levels of teachers has been shown to impact positively on teaching and learning in a school.

Step 2

A one-day meeting/workshop will be held to work on the analysis, vision and to start the planning process

The views of the parents and pupils will be an essential part of the evaluation process. This can be done through surveys and meetings with the parents and students councils. The BOM will be kept informed at all times of the progress of the process.

Step 3

A number of meetings will take place to allow the workgroups to devise and implement the plans. The timetable for these meetings can be incorporated into the school calendar. I will work with the groups on developing and implementing the plans.

Step 4

A review workshop will take place to assess the progress of the plan and how effective it is in terms of realising the vision. Plans can be reviewed and revised throughout the process.

Step 5

The empowerment questionnaire will be redone to assess any improvement in the empowerment levels

Step 6

As part of my Doctoral Research studies I wish to interview as many participants in the self-evaluation process as possible. This will help to generate learning from and about the process as well as fulfil my college requirements. Participation in the interviews is completely voluntary.

Appendix D: Self-Evaluation Tool

School Self-evaluation Tool

Quality Standards and Evaluation Criteria are listed below. In relation to each of the Evaluation Criteria, please indicate (by ticking a box) if it is • **In Place**; • **Needs Further Work**; • **Not yet in Place**; or • **Don't Know**

Quality Standards and Evaluation Criteria	Status				Key strengths and identified gaps
1. LEARNING <i>Attainment and progress</i>	In Place	Needs Further Work	Not in Place	Don't Know	
1.1 Pupils' work accords with national standards and expectations.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are willing to initiate discussion and to ask relevant questions					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils listen attentively and speak clearly					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are prepared to make use of and extend their range of vocabulary.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils read and write with accuracy, fluency and understanding.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Spelling and punctuation are good.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Numerical work is generally accurate.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils use calculators and ICT with confidence and can apply their numerical skills in practical situations.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Due care is taken of equipment and materials and attention paid to health and safety precautions.					

Adapted from: O'Brien, S. (2005). *Guidelines for centre development planning. Quality Framework Initiative: Youthreach and senior Traveller training centres*. Dublin: Youthreach and Bracknell Forest Education Department Curriculum Quality and Achievement Branch (1999) *Criteria for School Evaluation and Development*, Bracknell Forest Borough Council

1.2 Pupils, including those with special needs, make good progress	In Place	Needs Further Work	Not in Place	Don't Know	Key strengths and identified gaps	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils make good progress towards the objectives in their programmes of work						
<input type="checkbox"/> Tasks and activities are well designed and suitably differentiated to enable pupils to participate fully.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils with particular aptitudes and abilities are provided with materials and/or activities that will extend them						
<input type="checkbox"/> The spoken and written language used for teaching and in classroom displays is adapted to pupils' needs.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils have suitable access to classrooms and equipment.						
2. DISCIPLINE Attitudes, behaviours and personal development	In Place	Needs Further Work	Not in Place	Don't Know		
2.1 Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils relate well to their teachers.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are motivated and interested in their work. They concentrate on their tasks.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are confident when working and are able to work well without close supervision.						
<input type="checkbox"/> In group work, pupils are willing to co-operate or lead, as necessary, and show respect for others in the group.						
2.2 Pupils' attendance and punctuality are good	In Place	Needs Further Work	Not in Place	Don't Know		
<input type="checkbox"/> Overall, pupils' attendance is above 90%.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils' attendance rates are monitored. Unauthorised absences are followed up promptly.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There are high standards of punctuality and sessions begin and end on time.						

2.3 There is an agreed whole school policy for the management of pupils' behaviour.	In Place	Needs Further Mark	Not in Place	Don't Know	Key strengths and identified gaps
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils work conscientiously and co-operatively with staff and with one another.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils behave well in class, when moving about the school, in the playground and on their way to and from school.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are encouraged to develop self-esteem, to accept responsibility and to develop self-discipline.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff expectations of pupils' behaviour are consistent and appropriate.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Discipline problems are dealt with by staff in a sensitive but firm manner.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff who are dealing with particularly difficult situations receive support.					
<input type="checkbox"/> The achievements of all pupils are recognised.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There is a sensitive and consistently applied system of rewards and sanctions known to pupils and their parents.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Implementation of the behaviour policy is monitored by management					

3. TEACHING The quality of education provided	In Place	Needs Further Mark	Not in Place	Don't Know	Key strengths and identified gaps
3.1 Lessons have clear aims which match the needs of all the pupils					
<input type="checkbox"/> The intended outcomes of lessons are clear and are known by the pupils.					
<input type="checkbox"/> The choice of content is in keeping with the relevant schemes of work.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Content is pitched at levels suited to the ages, abilities and stages of development of all the pupils in the class.					

<input type="checkbox"/> Learning is sequential and builds on pupils' previous experiences and attainments					
<input type="checkbox"/> Intended activities or tasks are purposeful.					
3.2 A positive classroom ethos helps pupils to learn	In Place	Needs Further Work	Not in Place	Don't Know	
<input type="checkbox"/> There are high expectations of standards of work and behaviour.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are clear and well-understood organisational procedures.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Instructions are given clearly and followed sensibly.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Praise and encouragement are used to reward good work and behaviour.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Control of pupils is good. Appropriate action in keeping with the school's behaviour policy is taken if required.					
3.3 The teaching in each session motivates and extends each pupil in the group.	In Place	Needs Further Work	Not in Place	Don't Know	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tasks and activities are designed to extend the abilities of all pupils in the class.					
<input type="checkbox"/> All pupils are given equal opportunity to take part and succeed.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are suitably grouped, given the teacher's intentions and the purpose of the activity.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Activities contribute to the development of a range of skills, such as observing, listening, discussing, experimenting, problem solving, recording.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers describe and explain clearly.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers use questions to make pupils think and reflect on ideas, issues and experiences.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers help pupils to recognise what is important by drawing together what has been learned.					
3.4 The teaching over a period of time ensures that pupils develop a full range of skills					

<input type="checkbox"/> Over time, pupils have opportunities to work independently as individuals, collaboratively in groups of different size and composition, or as a whole class.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are taught study skills; how to plan, how to research and how to find out for themselves.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are taught to be self-critical.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate homework is set to build and on extend classwork.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are given planned opportunities to use ICT.					
3.5 There are whole school approaches to cross-curricular themes					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are planned and co-ordinated opportunities for pupils to gain the knowledge and skills related to: -health education; environmental education; -education for citizenship; -careers education and guidance; -personal and social education.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are clear statements of the ways in which cross-curricular work is to be undertaken.					
3.6 There is co-ordinated provision throughout the school for pupils with special educational needs					
<input type="checkbox"/> There is consistent and co-ordinated support for pupils with special needs or aptitudes.					
<input type="checkbox"/> A co-ordinator for special needs acts as a consultant to staff, works co-operatively with class teachers, gives services and pastoral support to particular pupils and leads staff development in this field.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Classes are organised to maximise the integration of all pupils.					
<input type="checkbox"/> The implications of identified needs for classroom management and organisation are known by the class teacher.					

<input type="checkbox"/> Where pupils receive additional support, there is effective liaison between the class teacher and the support teacher.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom assistants are provided with clear objectives and training for their work with pupils and make a significant contribution to pupils' progress.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Effective use is made of external support services.						
4. ASSESSMENT The quality of assessment	In Place	Needs Further Mark	Not in Place	Don't Know	Key strengths and identified gaps	
4.1 Strategies for assessing pupils' progress are designed to help pupils to learn						
<input type="checkbox"/> Each pupil's class work and homework is assessed regularly and accurately.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are aware of the criteria against which assessments of their work are made.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Progress is reinforced by constructive comment from teachers to pupils. Praise is used to motivate.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Marking of pupils' work is consistent and reflects school policy.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Records are up-to-date and maintained in keeping with school policy.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment outcomes are used to plan the future work of individual pupils						
4.2 Outcomes are recorded regularly.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Recording of assessments is consistent, manageable and sufficient.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Information in records is clear and easily retrieved.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Records are up-to-date						
4.3 Outcomes are reported regularly and are used to good effect.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils get regular feedback and take part in discussion of their progress.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Teachers use assessment outcomes to plan their future teaching.						

<input type="checkbox"/> Parents have regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress with teachers.					
5. RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL EDUCATION The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils	In Place	Needs Further Mark	Not in Place	Don't Know	Key strengths and identified gaps
5.1 Emphasis is given to pupils' social and cultural development					
<input type="checkbox"/> The ethos of the school is caring but purposeful.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There is an appropriate rapport between staff and between staff and pupils.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff and pupils are sensitive to individual needs.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There is a climate of respect for all cultures and traditions.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Displays feature the work of pupils of all abilities and acknowledge the contributions of different cultures.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There is concern for more vulnerable members of the school community.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils contribute to community events and to support for those less fortunate than themselves.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils and staff take advantage of opportunities to meet and work together through extra-curricular activities.					
5.2 Emphasis is given to pupils' spiritual and moral development.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are opportunities for pupils to express ideas and opinions about religious and moral issues					
<input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities are taken to discuss right and wrong in different circumstances.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are trusted and respond well to the trust given to them.					
<input type="checkbox"/> The school's code of conduct reflects the spiritual and moral values expressed in its aims.					
<input type="checkbox"/> the school has a comprehensive sex education programme					
5.3 There are daily arrangements for collective worship					

<input type="checkbox"/> All pupils, other than those withdrawn by their parents, take part in a daily act of collective worship						
<input type="checkbox"/> Collective worship reflects the stated values and aims of the school.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Collective worship is seen by staff and pupils as an important and valued part of each school day						
6. GUIDANCE Guidance, support, and pupil's welfare	In Place	Needs Further Mark	Not in Place	Don't Know	Key strengths and identified gaps	
6.1 There is a co-ordinated programme of careers education and guidance						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils learn about different life styles, are developing the skills to enable them to be effective in a variety of adult roles and occupations, and visit places of work.						
<input type="checkbox"/> A good range of catalogued, up-to-date resources provides information about careers, further and higher education						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are prepared for and undertake work experience and other work related activities.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are helped through counselling and action planning, individually and in groups, to make considered choices of careers and occupations.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils receive positive help in developing transition skills, and in moving from school to adult and working life.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There are active and fruitful links with further and higher education, with employers, with the community						
6.2 Practice reflects equality of opportunity.						
<input type="checkbox"/> The language and behaviour of staff and pupils indicates awareness of and sensitivity to social and cultural issues.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff give equal attention to all groups of pupils.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Value is placed on languages other than English spoken by pupils.						
6.3 There is consistent and co-ordinated support for each pupil throughout the school						

<input type="checkbox"/> Each pupil's needs are identified and progress monitored.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are well maintained records of each pupil's academic, personal, social and vocational development.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral support and guidance contributes to the work ethic in the school and to a consistent and constructive approach to pupils and their parents.					
6.4 Policies and plans seek to ensure equal opportunity for all pupils					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils learn about different life styles, are developing the skills to enable them to be effective in a variety of adult roles and occupations, and visit places of work.					
<input type="checkbox"/> A good range of catalogued, up-to-date resources provides information about careers, further and higher education					
6.5 There is a range of extra-curricular activities					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils have opportunities to develop talents and interests beyond the timetabled curriculum.					
<input type="checkbox"/> A wide range of extra-curricular activities are provided in the school					
7. PARTNERSHIPS Partnership with parents and the community	In Place	Needs Further Work	Not in Place	Don't Know	Key strengths and identified gaps
7.1 Visitors to the school are made to feel welcome					
<input type="checkbox"/> The entrance and reception area are signposted clearly. Rooms are labelled.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Parents and other visitors are greeted in a friendly and courteous manner and are offered help on arrival.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There is an attractive area with comfortable seats for those who need to wait.					
<input type="checkbox"/> School publications and other information about the school are available to visitors.					
7.2 There are effective links with other local schools and colleges					

<input type="checkbox"/> Staff and pupils from local schools are offered shared use of facilities and expertise.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There is an effective programme of induction for new pupils.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Parents of pupils new to the school are helped to get to know the school and the staff responsible for their child.					
7.3 Parents and the community are well informed about the work of the school.					
<input type="checkbox"/> A clear school prospectus summarises the curriculum and other aspects of school life					
<input type="checkbox"/> Parents have the opportunity to meet the staff					
7.4 The school contributes to the life of the local community.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Members of the community are invited to school events.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Expertise within the school is made available to the local community and to business and commerce.					
<input type="checkbox"/> The BOM help to make the local community aware of what the school can offer.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils contribute to local events or projects					
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils help to provide for those living locally who are less fortunate than themselves.					
8. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT The management and efficiency of the school	In Place	Needs Further Mark	Not in Place	Don't Know	Key strengths and identified gaps
8.1 There is influential leadership of the school.					
<input type="checkbox"/> The principal, deputy and senior staff have breadth of vision and the ability to motivate others; they give direction and purpose to the work of the school					
<input type="checkbox"/> They have the confidence of the BOM, staff, pupils and parents.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Appropriate, challenging and realistic targets are set.					
8.2 There are effective and well understood processes for making decisions.					

<input type="checkbox"/> There is common understanding of the distinction between consultation and decision making and that the principal is ultimately responsible to the BOM for all decisions made.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Where appropriate, decisions are delegated to groups or individuals and this is made clear to all concerned.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Decisions are taken following consultation with all interested individuals or groups					
<input type="checkbox"/> Decisions made are explained clearly to all those involved.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are effective systems to ensure that decisions are carried out and their implementation monitored.					
<input type="checkbox"/> The outcomes of decisions are reviewed and are modified if necessary.					
8.3 Communications are efficient.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are clearly defined, consistently used, channels of communication.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are regular briefing meetings for staff and others associated with the school.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Brief summaries of new developments are circulated.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Essential, up-to-date information is displayed where it can readily be seen.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications are in language which everyone can understand.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Communication procedures are reviewed regularly after consultation with staff, parents and governors.					
8.4 Administration is efficient.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are clear procedures for administration, used consistently by all staff.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Files are accessible and information easy to retrieve. Contents are up-to-date and are reviewed regularly.					
<input type="checkbox"/> There are up-to-date lists of pupils for each teaching group.					
<input type="checkbox"/> Registers are taken regularly, are accurate, and distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absences.					

<input type="checkbox"/> Arrangements for covering staff absences are efficient and are fairly applied.						
9.STAFFING Staff development	In Place	Needs Further Mark	Not in Place	Don't Know		Key strengths and identified gaps
9.1 There is a clear staffing structure and clearly delegated responsibilities.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There are enough staff, with appropriate qualifications and relevant experience, to teach the full curriculum.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff are deployed according to the needs of the pupils and of the curriculum.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There is a clear line management structure.						
9.2 All staff has an entitlement to professional development opportunities.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There are adequate opportunities for all staff to take part in professional development activities						
<input type="checkbox"/> There is an effective programme of induction for newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Training opportunities are provided for support staff and supply teachers.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Records are kept of staff appraisals and participation in courses and other professional development activities.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Training activities are followed up after they have taken place.						
<input type="checkbox"/> The effectiveness of in-service training is evaluated.						
9.3 Use is made of school based opportunities for staff development.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There is adequate supervision of and support for all staff in their daily tasks.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There are planned opportunities for staff to experience a variety of roles and responsibilities.						
<input type="checkbox"/> All staff has opportunities to observe and to work alongside colleagues on some occasions.						

<input type="checkbox"/> The school draws on staff expertise to lead development groups and in-service training sessions.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There is planned and effective use of staff days for consideration of school issues.						
10. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT School building and resources	In Place	Needs Further Mark	Not in place	Don't Know		Key strengths and identified gaps
10.1 The physical environment is well maintained and attractive.						
<input type="checkbox"/> The school grounds are well maintained and free of litter.						
<input type="checkbox"/> The accommodation is well lit and in a good state of decoration and repair.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Well mounted and up-to-date displays serving clear purposes are featured where pupils can see them.						
10.2 The school building is suitable and safe						
<input type="checkbox"/> The site and buildings are suitable for the purposes for which they are used.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor and play areas offer sufficient space and varied opportunities for activity.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There are sufficient general teaching spaces of an adequate size.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There are sufficient specialist areas, suitably equipped.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Fixtures and fittings are safe and safety rules observed.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Responsibilities for the care and security of different parts of the building are identified.						
<input type="checkbox"/> Staff and pupils are conscious of the need to care for the environment.						
<input type="checkbox"/> The caretaker and cleaning staff contribute satisfactorily to the maintenance and cleanliness of the school.						
<input type="checkbox"/> There is an effective lettings policy designed to increase the community use of the site and buildings and to provide additional income for the school.						

10.3 There are appropriate and adequate resources for teaching and learning and for the management of the school.				
<input type="checkbox"/> There are sufficient up-to-date resources available for teaching and a suitable range of them.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Resources are located so that maximum use can be made of them.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Resources are well organised, easily accessible and in good condition.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Catalogues and stock lists are up-to-date.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Good use is made of available residential facilities, educational visits and community resources.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Sufficient ICT hardware and software is available for school administration as well as for teaching and learning purposes.				
<input type="checkbox"/> There is adequate technical and clerical support for teaching staff.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Pupils are taught to select relevant resources for the tasks they undertake.				
<input type="checkbox"/> Due attention is paid to health and safety.				

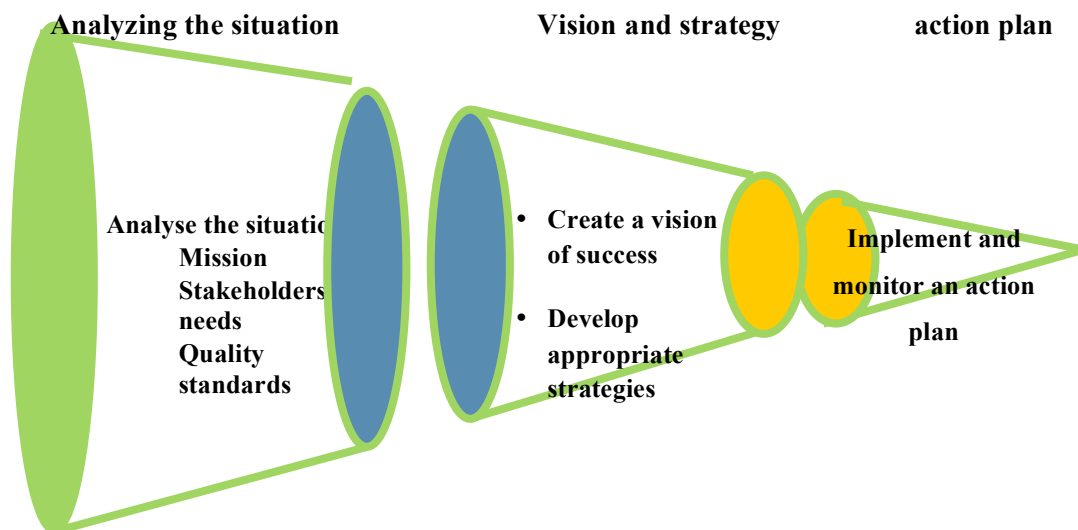
Appendix E: Workshop report

Section 1: Introduction

This report presents a summary of the self-evaluation programme held in St. David's CBS secondary school in the school year 2012/ 13. The aim of the programme is to evaluate the processes and procedures in St. David's with a view to bringing about improvements the key areas of teaching and learning. The objectives of the programme were to:

- To analyse the school mission and the needs of the different stakeholders
- To evaluate the quality standards in the school under set criteria
- To assess the empowerment level of the teaching staff in the school
- To create a vision of the kind of school that will meet the needs of all the stakeholders of the school
- To devise strategies to realize the vision
- To implement an action plan to realize the vision
- To review this action plan

A three step process of analysis, vision and strategy and action planning was used in the process.



The process involved a number of workshops early in the school year to evaluate the practices in the school and to prepare the action plan. Work groups were established to develop and implement an action plan to improve the school. The progress of the work groups was monitored throughout the year in staff meetings.

This report gives a summary of the Self-evaluation workshops that took place in the school. It also names the workgroups and details the progress of the groups in terms of achieving their objectives.

Section Two: Workshop details

Stage 1: Evaluation

Mission

The staff was asked to say what they felt the mission of St. Davids was. Responses included:

- Provide education for local students.
- Prepare for world of work and further education.
- Develop potential of students to be the best they can be.
- Equip students to face life's challenges.
- To provide a balanced education.
- Develop the social skills of the students.
- Help with their spiritual and physical development
- To produce well rounded individuals.
- Participate in society.

The mission statement as presented in the school website was examined and discussed. Staff was asked if this was still relevant today or did it need to be amended.

The school is a Catholic school, promoting Christian values, that provide opportunities for every student to achieve his full potential in academic, artistic, social and sporting spheres in an atmosphere that promotes responsibility, tolerance and respect for others.

The consensus was that it was still relevant and meaningful today. One suggestion was that the mission should be presented in reverse order with 'St. Davids is a Catholic school, promoting Christian values...' coming at the end of the statement. It was felt that changing the mission statement would require consultation with all the stakeholders; trustees, parents and students and not just the staff.

Stakeholders and their needs

Participants were asked to identify the different stakeholders of the school and to state what they felt their needs were.

Stakeholders	Needs
STUDENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe Environment• Good, caring teachers• Approachable teachers	PARENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe Environment for children• Quality Education• Help for their child to realise his

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A voice-need to be heard • Good choice of subjects • Inclusive • A good education • Emotional Support • Pastoral Care • Lunch facilities • To be happy/ positive affirmation • Extra-Curricular activities 	<p>potential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness/equality for their child • Career guidance /help with deciding on subject/ career choice • Communication/ to be heard and kept informed • Involved/ to be involved in their sons's education • Wide range of facilities
<p>STAFF</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety (e.g. buzzer system for access) • Resources • Support in classroom • Parental support • Good open communication • Good staff morale • Opportunities for P.O.R. • Recognition for good work • Professional Development • Sense of belonging 	<p>COMMUNITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe school • School to be proud of • A school involved in a community • Religious Education • Quality Education through a holistic approach • Teachers and students visible • School facilities open to community
<p>TRUSTEES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brothers (less of them) • Run through Christian values and Edmund Rice tradition • Good financial governance • Run as a Catholic School • Accountability 	<p>BOARD OF MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role/Responsibility • DES/Trustees/Staff all working together • Kept informed on a monthly basis • Good and fair discipline system • Transparent policies <p>That the school meets all statutory requirements</p>
<p>DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND</p>	

<p>SCIENCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment that supports teaching and learning • Implementation of syllabi • State Exams • Accountability • Records/Books • Inspection • Literacy/Numeracy 	
--	--

Evaluating the Quality Standards

The staff worked in groups to evaluate the performance of the school in terms of meeting the needs of the stakeholders. They were given a questionnaire that identified quality standards for different areas of the school and criteria that indicated best practice in these areas. They were asked to score them under four headings:

In place, Needs further work, Not in place, or Don't Know.

They were also asked to qualitatively assess each quality standard for strengths and weaknesses. A summary of the findings are presented below:

Quality area: ATTAINMENT AND PROGRESS

Quality Standard: Pupils' work accord with national standards and expectations/ Pupils, including those with special needs, make good progress

Weakness	Strengths
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Literacy Full stops/ Capital letters. Punctuation – Grammar could be improved. 2. need to create a culture of reading/ Home environment/ need to work with the parents/ Set up library/ membership to the public library/ mobile library. 3. Numeracy. Maths transcends all subjects / need to take an integrated approach (woodwork, geography, science, tech graphics). Ideas could include: clock in classroom, graphs, mobile phone digital. 4. ICT (basic skills) poster in lab basic steps opening/saving/ cut and paste 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good resources for all levels. 2. Special needs students are integrated well in to class. 3. Differentiated/Adopted work for students with special needs.

2. ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOURS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes

Weakness	Strengths
<p>Exam projects, LCVP, attendance needs further work. Sometimes marks are not enough to motivate them. Supervision is essential, students need to be supervised/ some students not able to identify with education. Lack of confidence can lead to discipline issues. Group work, some good participants, co-operative learning needs to be really structured. Class dependent.</p>	<p>Students expect and mostly have good relationship with teachers.</p> <p>The majority of students give no trouble while in the school Most incidents of indiscipline are of a minor nature The carerom system works well The texting system keeps the parents informed about the conduct of their son The merit system is valued by the students and should be used more</p>

Pupil's attendance and punctuality are good

Weakness	Strengths
<p>Structure is there can be difficult to implement follow up due to the volume of absences, parents not answering. Can be a cultural problem. Kids on holidays during term time and parents covering for kids. Some students not compliant. After lunch, morning time. Lateness contributes to disruptive behaviour.</p>	<p>Texting, eportal and scp are all good initiative. Recent detention system for lateness has improved the situation</p>

3. PROVISION: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED.

Lessons have clear aims which match the needs of all the pupils.

Weakness	Strengths
<p>Students sometimes might not communicate that they don't understand something. Time constraints of implementing a full lesson.</p>	<p>Syllabus is implemented. Subject meetings very helpful in this area. Teachers by and large plan their classes well Teachers diary a big help as is the eportal system for roll call/ exam results</p>

A positive classroom ethos helps pupils learn.

Weakness	Strengths
<p>Depends on class itself. There may a different expectation in terms of work for a remedial class. Good classes may have too high an expectation at times.</p>	<p>Communication with parents is good and generally the rules are followed for good practice. Merit system of the week seems to work.</p>

Teaching resources are managed effectively

Weakness	Strengths
At times can be difficult because of the amount of students in the room.	The school is very well resourced Teachers have their own room so can control resources

The teaching in each session motivates and extends each pupil in the group.

Weakness	Strengths
Sometimes you can be constrained by time. Very difficult to motivate all students in classes where some students are badly behaved and have a lack of motivation. This also applies when talking about the teaching approach.	The availability of IT screens in the classrooms is a positive factor Some students are highly motivated

The teaching over a period of time ensures that pupils develop a full range of skills.

Weakness	Strengths
There has to be something in place. Students need to be made more aware of being self-critical, maybe some sort of talk given to them.	Most key skills are covered in the different subjects

Strategies for assessing pupils' progress are designed to help pupils learn

Weakness	Strengths
Not a whole school approach, teachers unaware of eportal system for merit. Challenges to teachers at time.	Regular testing, Christmas and summer. Most teachers give their own class based assessments throughout the year

There are whole school approaches to cross- curricular themes.

Weakness	Strengths
Little time is given to cross-curricular themes. Teachers might informally chat with teachers from other subjects	Banding, timetabling challenging Subject meetings are useful for whole school approach to teaching and assessing the individual subjects

There is a range of extra-curricular activities

Weakness	Strengths
Difficulties can arise due to the same students missing the same classes each week	In place/ we have a great culture of extra-curricular activities We still have a lot of teachers who give up their free time to look after teams and do plays and musicals

There is co-coordinated provision throughout the school for pupils with special educational needs

Weakness	Strengths
Lack of whole approach/staff Lack of information on SEN students. Needs to better communication between support teacher and subject teacher. Information gap in external support agencies. Teachers need more training in the area of teaching students with special needs	There is a great culture of SEN students in St. Davids being well looked after. The SNA are a great help in the classroom

The assessment process is fair and equitable.

Weakness	Strengths
While some subjects give common tests not all do There is too long a delay in sending out test results	Christmas and summer exams are well organized

Outcomes are recorded regularly

Weakness	Strengths
Little analysis of the results is carried out	E Portal is very useful for recording results Journal, mentors

4. THE SPIRITUAL, MORAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF PUPIL

Emphasis is given to pupils' social and cultural development

Weakness	Strengths
Multi-cultural pupils are taken in and often ignored. Should be multi-cultural event and every nationality respected and given an opportunity to show themselves.	Involvement in teams and plays helps to develop social skills Students who leave the school in sixth year are generally very well balance Good to meet students in the street when they have left school/ usually very friendly

Emphasis is given to pupils' spiritual and moral development

Weakness	Strengths
No formal sex education programme in senior cycle. Spiritual development is generally left to religion teachers	Within class students can voice their own opinions. All the classes have religious instruction

There are daily arrangements for collective worship

Weakness	Strengths
Few teachers say prayers before class Little reference to religion outside religion class	Every year group has a mass at the beginning of the year

5. SUPPORT GUIDANCE AND PUPIL'S WELFARE

Policies and plans seek to ensure equal opportunity for all pupils.

Weakness	Strengths
We create 'bias' – by streaming No assessment made of the impact of streaming in the school. Has it made a positive impact on results? No value on other languages. Socially inclusive but not necessarily cultural. More specialised resources required. Need to update subject plans. Limited German	Good range of subjects Equal opportunity for extra-curricular Having LCA every two years limits the access for weaker students Opportunity to learn at their own level.

There is a consistent and coordinated support for each pupil throughout the school.

Weakness	Strengths
Needs to be developed further. Good form tutor and home school liaison. More information should be given to teachers in relation to students needs. Sensitive information should be discussed with their teachers.	Individual class meetings Good relationship with the class tutor

There is a co-coordinated programme of careers education and guidance.

Weakness	Strengths
Careers need to be introduced into junior cycle. TY LCA careers night should be continued. Follow up past pupils and keep a directory.	Good in TY, LCA and LCVP. Lifestyles covered in CSPE, RE, SPHE

6. PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY.

Visitors to the school are made to feel welcome.

Weakness	Strengths
People are not sure where the office is a sign is needed. Office door should be open.	Website is very important.

There are effective links with other schools and colleges

Weakness	Strengths
Teachers' relationships with primary schools needs development.	Overall the school has a good relationship with local schools Active home school liaison officer

Parents and the community are well informed about the work of the school

Weakness	Strengths
Maybe a morning where first years come to school with their parents so teachers can meet them informally. Parents contributing to the life of the school needs to be encouraged. Business and D.C.U. need to be utilized better.	Open Night, Christmas Carols, and Parent teacher meeting.

The school contributes to the life of the local community

Weakness	Strengths
Need to work further on school being available to the local community. i.e. OAP course to work on literacy and computers.	The school has a strong sporting link with the local clubs

7. THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

There is influential leadership of the school.

Weakness	Strengths
Not all staff would have confidence in leadership.	Very approachable.

There is an effective and well understood process for making decisions.

Weakness	Strengths
Mentoring new staff Need more review, evaluation, corrective action implemented	Decisions emerge from staff consensus Areas such as the carerom system came from extensive staff consultation

Communications are efficient

Weakness	Strengths
E Portal could be used more	Staff are informed about important things

Administration is efficient

Weakness	Strengths
Dependent on consistent use by individual staff.	There are three secretaries in the office The eportal is a useful way of recording data

Stage 2: Vision

The staff was put into groups and was asked to draw a vision of success for St. Davids. Five groups drew pictures of their vision and the main points of the vision were extrapolated from the pictures.

KEY POINTS OF VISION

Positive atmosphere

- A safe, welcoming school with happy people
- A second home!
- Whole school approach, parents, staff, community working together.
- Student-centered education
- Clean, well kept school environment that people can be proud of

Holistic education

- Developing the full person/spiritual/ social/ physical
- A wide variety of activities
- Excelling in Sport/ICT/Music/Art

Culture of accomplishment

- Academic Focus
- Competent in literacy/numeracy
- Culture of students studying and working independently

A Growing school

- School of choice for local students
- Numbers are growing
- Harnessing diversity

Stakeholders

Three meetings were held with the parents' council to get their input into the self-evaluation process.

A very useful discussion took place in the meetings. In the first meeting the parents gave their views on each of the areas in the self-evaluation workshop sheet. This meeting was facilitated by the Brian Ladden. In the second meeting the parents met themselves to compose a more reflective response to the issues raised. In the third meeting the council reported back to the facilitator.

Most of the issues raised were already included in the report. A summary of the new ideas include:

Strengths

- Most key skills are covered in the different subjects
- Christmas and summer exams are good to keep the students focused.
- Overall the communication in the school is good. E Portal is very useful for recording results Journal, mentors
- Parent teacher meetings are useful.
- Good emphasis on extra-curricular activities and educating the whole child. A lot of teachers who give up their free time to look after teams and do plays and musicals. The same children missing the same classes each week is a problem.
- Involvement in teams and plays good for developing social skills.
- SEN students are very well looked after in the school.
- The SNA are a great help in the classroom
- All the classes have religious instruction though the ethos in the school does not force the catholic religion on the students.
- Book rental system could be improved-some books very dirty and worn
- There could be more initiatives to improve the culture of reading in the school-parent-student reading groups in first year for instance
- Attendance and lateness seems to be a problem-something should be done
- Very positive atmosphere in school though students could be pushed to achieve more.
- The resources in the school are excellent-music rooms/ computers/ woodwork rooms/ metal work rooms/ science rooms etc. very good
- The children should get more homework. They seem to do a lot of it in school in free classes so we don't know if they have it done or not
- Leadership in school is good. Discipline is good.

Two meeting was held with the Students Council to get their views on the school improvement project and how they felt the school could be improved.

Stage 3: Realising the vision

The staff was asked for suggestions as to how the vision could be realised. They were also asked to vote on which suggestions should be given priority. These areas will contribute to the discussion on what areas should be addressed in the coming year.

Suggestions

Votes

• Study skills programme	16
• Work on first years homework/study	16
• Involve parents with study skills	11
• Clean-up school	11
• Intake	11
• Lunchtime behaviour of students	11
• Student Assemblies	11
• Memorial to deceased staff and students	11
• Keep school clean, including gym and fields	11
• Clean up Reception Area	10
• Class meeting with teachers	9
• Students should be encouraged to do extra-curricular activities	8
• School newsletter/yearbook	8
• Meetings with parents after mocks 3 rd /6 th years	7
• Deal with parents more	6
• School promotion	6
• Push positive image	6
• Smile	6
• Communicate more (re: students)	5
• Teachers need to lead by example	5
• Do two things on the list	5
• Lunch more choice	4
• Emphasis on pastoral care/Positive behaviour	4
• Stamp out bad language	4
• Prefects	4
• Learn to say students surnames	4
• Stronger link with parents	3
• Forge links with feeder schools	3
• Bar fizzy drinks	3
• Reading initiative (Week long)	3
• Class tutor role	2
• Mitching/Attendance	2
• Mocks in January	2
• Multi-cultural day	2
• Improve motivation (Vision Boards)	1
• Integration: Specific events for days	1

- Library study room 1
- Photos of first to sixth year 1
- TY involved with first year 0
- Lunchtime reading club 0
- Art work on corridor 0

Other ideas

- Students have own study desk at home
- Reading room
- Study Room /Encouraged to work
- Chaplin
- Better Bus
- Space for seniors
- Breakfast club (Kellogg's sponsor)
- Prefects

Action Plan

Three main areas were targeted for action by the staff for the year. Project teams were set up to work on different aspects of these areas to develop and implement a plan of action to improve these areas. The areas are:

- Teaching and learning
- Atmosphere to support teaching and learning
- Promoting the school/ growth

Teaching and learning	Environment to support teaching and learning	School promotion/ growing the school
Literacy and numeracy	Positive behaviour/ anti-bullying	School promotion
ICT	Health and safety	Newsletter
Project maths		Website
Special Education Needs		
Study skills		
Lunchtime reading		
Examination results analysis		
Book rental scheme		

School improvement project teams

Project choices	Staff member <i>Teachers names deleted for privacy</i>
Literacy and numeracy	
Health and safety	
ICT	
Positive behaviour/ Anti-bullying	
School promotion	
Newsletter	
Project maths	
SEN	
Study skills programme/Work on first years homework/Involve parents	
Clean-up school environment	
Website	
Memorial to deceased staff and students	
Lunchtime reading club	
Examination results analysis	

Appendix F: Planning Sheet

Planning Sheet			
Project accomplishment	Steps (Action)	Responsibility (Name)	Deadlines (Date)
First step			
25%			
50%			
75%			
100%			
What or who might help us achieve our objectives		What action, if any, to take	Who?
What might stop us achieve our objectives		How to address	Who?

Appendix G: SSE Proposal

Proposal

Aims of the project

To initiate a self-evaluation programme in the school with a view to bringing about improvements in school practices

Objectives

- To analyse the needs of the stakeholders
- To create a vision of the kind of school that will meet the needs of all the stakeholders of the school
- To devise strategies to realize the vision
- To implement an action plan to realize the vision
- To monitor and review the action plan

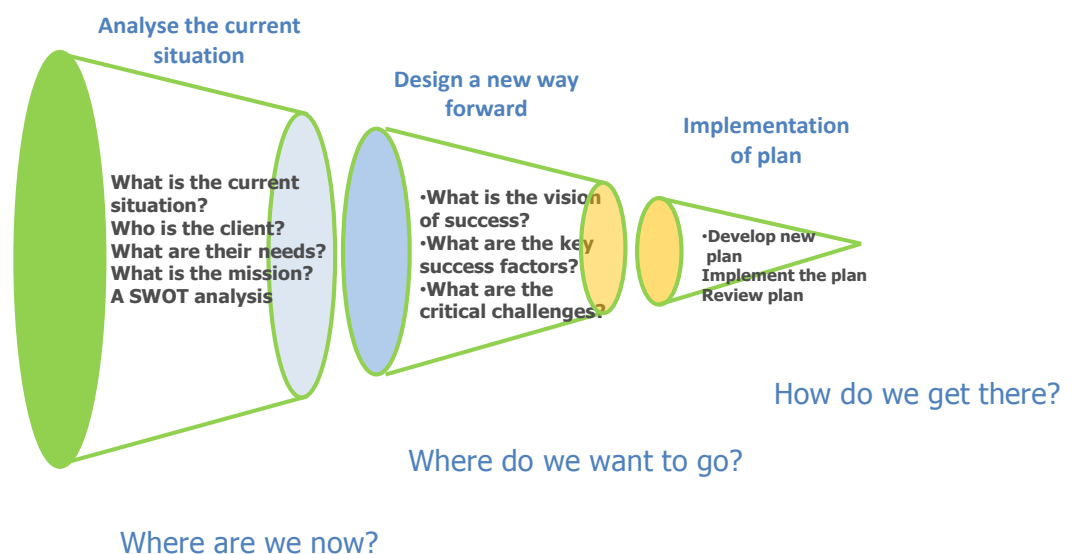
The development plan

Rationale behind the planning process

The planning process is based around the Solution Cone Methodology which is a three step process of analysis, vision and planning and action. The process will be a continuous cycle of action, review and planning, which will hopefully bring about sustained improvement to the school.

Figure 1

Rationale behind the planning process



STEP 1: ANALYSE THE CURRENT SITUATION

Where are we now?

The first step is to analyse the current situation in the school. The analysis should be focused on the needs of all the stakeholders; pupils, parents, staff, Board of Management, the DES. A number of key questions need to be answered at this stage:

4. Who are the stakeholders?
5. What are their needs?
6. What is our mission?
7. Evaluate the criteria in relation to quality standards
8. What are our strengths and weaknesses? An evaluation tool will evaluate many different areas in the school to see where are we meeting the needs of the stakeholders and where could we improve?
9. How do we operate? How could we work more effectively together?

STEP2: WHAT IS THE VISION OF SUCCESS

What kind of a school do we want to create?

From the last section, it will be clear what areas in the school are strong and what needs improving. From this, create a vision of what success for the organisation will look like.

STEP 3: CREATE THE ACTION PLAN

How will we get there?

Examine the evaluation sheets to look for gaps or areas needing. The next step is to brainstorm all the things that could help the organisation achieve the vision. At this stage the aim is to capture as many ideas as possible no matter how trivial or off-the-wall they may seem. Once these have been identified they can be grouped into different categories and prioritised. These are the **Critical Challenges**. These are then the projects that will be worked on to achieve the vision. An individual is appointed to lead a Project Team (3 or 4 people) to drive each project. Each project team prepares a simple plan with targets and practical steps that will achieve the targets.

Figure 2: From vision to reality



- The groups set out the nature, scope and objectives of the project.
- The objectives should be SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timed). .
- The groups should then set milestones for the project. Each milestone should be identified and timed
- Things that might help or hinder the success of the project should be identified and discussed

The plan will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis

Programme outline

Step 1

A survey will be carried out in the school to assess the empowerment levels of the staff. A reported output of self-evaluation in other studies is an increase in teacher empowerment levels. Raising empowerment levels of teachers has been shown to impact positively on teaching and learning in a school.

Step 2

A 1 day meeting/workshop will be held to work on the analysis, vision and to start the planning process

The views of the parents and pupils will be an essential part of the evaluation process. This can be done through surveys and meetings with the parents and students councils. The BOM will be kept informed at all times of the progress of the process.

Step 3

A number of meetings will take place to allow the workgroups to devise and implement the plans. The timetable for these meetings can be incorporated into the school calendar. I will work with the groups on developing and implementing the plans.

Step 4

A review workshop will take place to assess the progress of the plan and how effective it is in terms of realising the vision. Plans can be reviewed and revised throughout the process.

Step 5

The empowerment questionnaire will be redone to assess any improvement in the empowerment levels

Step 6

As part of my Doctoral Research studies I wish to interview as many participants in the self-evaluation process as possible. This will help to generate learning from and about the process as well as fulfil my college requirements. Participation in the interviews is completely voluntary.

Appendix H: Invitation to participate in research study

A Chara,

I am currently undertaking a research study with the School of Education Studies, Dublin City University, in part fulfilment of the Professional Doctorate Programme. I am inviting you to participate in my research project which is entitled '*Can Evaluation Improve the Quality of Education Provision? A Case Study of an evaluation process in an Irish Post-Primary school*'. The purpose of this study is to research the School Self-evaluation process that was introduced into the school over the course of this academic year and the Whole School Evaluation that took place towards the end of the year. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Prof. Gerry McNamara, School of Education Studies, Dublin City University.

The study will involve being interviewed by me for no more than 40 minutes and will take place in the school at a time that is convenient to you.

Your participation in this research is voluntary; please feel free to choose not to participate. If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to ask. If you agree to take part in this research, I will ask you to sign a consent form at the interview. The consent form will outline what is involved in the interview, how it will be recorded, how the data will be stored and who will have access to any information given. DCU's Research Ethics Committee has a set protocol for researchers; this study will comply with those rules.

Thank you for reading this letter and I hope that you will agree to participate in this study.

Le meas,

Brian Ladden

Appendix J: Plain language Statement

I. Introduction to the Research Study

This research study is entitled: ‘*Can Evaluation Improve the Quality of Education Provision? A Case Study of an evaluation process in an Irish Post-Primary school*’

The study is part of the requirement for the completion of the Professional Doctorate Programme in Dublin City University.

The research will be conducted by myself, Brian Ladden, (brianladden@gmail.com) under the supervision of Dr. Gerry McNamara, School of Education Studies, Dublin City University, Dublin 9.

II. Details of what involvement in the Research Study will require:

Participation in this study will involve being interviewed by me, for approximately 40 minutes; the interview will focus on your experiences during the implementation of the School Self-Evaluation process in the school, and your ideas and opinions on the Whole School Evaluation that was carried out in the school during the year.

With your permission, I will audio-tape the interview. The tape-recording will be transcribed for analysis by me, following the interview.

III. Potential risks to participants from involvement in the Research Study:

There are no obvious risks attached to involvement in this research.

IV. Benefits to participants from involvement in the Research Study:

No direct benefit, in the form of inducement or otherwise, is attached to participation in this study.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data:

Data and information gathered will be treated as confidential and will be stored securely during the lifetime of this study. There will be no public access to the audio-tapes of the interviews. Confidentiality of information, while promised, is subject to legal limitations and, in the event of a subpoena or a Freedom of Information claim, protection cannot be guaranteed.

VI. Advice as to whether or not data is to be destroyed after a minimum period:

Audio-tapes and transcripts of the interviews will be stored securely by me for the duration of this research study; they will be destroyed on completion of the final research project.

VII. Statement that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary:

Participation in this research study is voluntary; you may withdraw your participation at any point. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the research study have been completed.

VIII. Any other relevant information

The sample size for this project is relatively small; every effort will be taken to ensure the privacy and anonymity to which you are entitled. Staff members will not be named or identified: those being interviewed will be referred to as Interviewee 1, 2 and 3 etc.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000.

Appendix K: Informed Consent Form

I. Research Study Title

This research study is entitled: *‘Can Evaluation Improve the Quality of Education Provision? A Case Study of an evaluation process in an Irish Post-Primary school’*

The research will be conducted by myself, Brian Ladden, under the supervision of Dr. Gerry McNamara, School of Education Studies, Dublin City University. The study is part of the requirement for the completion of the Professional Doctorate Programme in DCU.

II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to explore the processes of School Self-Evaluation and Whole School Evaluation in a post-primary school to see if they bring about improvements to the school.

III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

Participation in this study will involve being interviewed by me, for approximately 40 minutes; the interview will focus on your experiences during the implementation of the School Self-Evaluation process in the school, and your ideas and opinions on the Whole School Evaluation that was carried out in the school during the year. With your permission, I will audiotape the interview.

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement?	Yes/No
Do you understand the information provided?	Yes/No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes/No
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	Yes/No
Are you aware that your interview will be audio taped?	Yes/No

IV. Confirmation that involvement in the Research Study is voluntary

Participation in this research study is voluntary; you may withdraw your participation at any time. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Research Study have been completed. All data related to your participation in the study will be destroyed in the event that you withdraw from the study.

V. Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data

Data and information gathered will be stored securely. There will be no public access to the audiotapes; these tapes will be destroyed by me on completion of the final research project. Confidentiality of information, while promised, is subject to legal limitations and, in the event of a subpoena or a freedom of information claim, protection cannot be guaranteed.

VI. Any other relevant information

The sample size for this project will be relatively small; every effort will be taken to ensure the privacy and anonymity of participants. Those being interviewed will be referred to as Interviewee 1, 2, 3 etc. All identifying details will be omitted from the text, as far as possible.

VII. Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researcher. I consent to take part in this research project.

Participant's Signature: _____

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix L: Schedule for Workshop One

Outline of self evaluation workshop 1

PART 1 (9.30- 11am)

Introduction (15 mins)

- workshop about school improvement
- improvement can be done through WSE or/and SSE

Process-Analysis, vision and strategy-show solution cone

Activity 1: (20mins)

Review mission of school-Why is the school here? What is the purpose?

Groups: 5 minutes-discuss what the mission is

Give feed back-write on flipchart

Is the mission still relevant today?

Activity 2: (20mins)

identify the stakeholders-brainstorm from floor

Group work what are their needs? Each group take one stakeholder (students, parents, BoM, community, staff, DES.

Feedback to main group

Tea break: 11-11.15 (15 mins)

PART 2 (11.15-1pm)

Activity 3:

Groups: Evaluation using templates (30 mins)

Give feedback to the main group-what are the strengths and what are the gaps? (1 hour)

Lunch: 1pm-1.45

PART 3 (1.45-3.30)

Activity 4: (30 mins)

Create a vision of success for the school. Work in groups and draw a vision on a flipchart of the kind of school we want to teach in.

Activity 5: (30 mins)

Present the visions to the main group. Identify the key points of the vision-write on a flipchart.

Activity 6: (20 mins)

Key success factors: Brainstorm-what are the things we need to do to realise the vision? Write ideas on flipchart

Activity 7: (15 mins)

Vote on the things the staff feels are priorities. Five votes per staff member.

Conclusion: (15 mins)

Tell staff what happens next-planning/ workgroups/ action plans/ implementation and review.

Evaluate session

Appendix M: Parents workshop tool

Parent's evaluation worksheet

1. Attainment and progress

I am happy that students work accord with national standards and expectations

Pupils, including those with special needs, make good progress

Students in this school are being challenged to achieve their potential

Areas for improvement	Strengths

2. Attitude, behaviour and personal development

Students demonstrate positive attitude towards school and learning

The discipline system in the school is effective

Pupil's attendance and punctuality are being monitored and issues addressed

Areas for improvement	Strengths

3. The Quality of Education Provided

*I am happy with the education provided in this school / There is a positive school ethos which helps the pupils learn/ The school is well resourced
The students are generally motivated to learn*

Areas for improvement	Strengths

4. Partnership with parents and the community

Visitors to the school are made to feel welcome/ Parents and the community are well informed about the work of the school/ The school contributes to the life of the local community/ I feel comfortable raising issues that concern me with the school

Areas for improvement	Strengths

5. Extra curricular

There is a good range of extra-curricular activities in the school/ Every student has the opportunity to take part in extra-curricular activities if they wish

Areas for improvement	Strengths

6. Special needs

Students with special needs are well looked after in this school

There is co-ordinated provision throughout the school for pupils with special educational needs

Weakness	Strengths

7. Assessment

*The assessment process is fair and equitable/ Outcomes are recorded regularly.
Results are communicated to parents on a regular basis*

Areas for improvement	Strengths

9. Support Guidance

*There is a consistent and co-ordinated support for each pupil throughout the school.
There is a co-ordinated programme of careers education and guidance in the school*

Areas for improvement	Strengths

8. Pupil's welfare

There is an effective policy of anti-bullying in the school/ I am aware of the anti-bullying and positive behaviour policies in the school/ the school deals effectively with instances when they arise
Counselling is available to students where it is necessary

Areas for improvement	Strengths

9. Spiritual and moral development of pupil

Emphasis is given to pupils' social, spiritual and cultural development
Emphasis is given to pupils' spiritual and moral development

Areas for improvement	Strengths

10. The management of the school

*The school is generally well run/ there is effective leadership of the school.
Communication with parents is effective/ Administration is efficient*

Areas for improvement	Strengths

Any other issues

Areas for improvement	Strengths

Appendix M: Excerpt from workshop 3 in Pilot school

Focus group 3.

Pilot school staff and Mr. Brian Ladden.

Thursday 9nd February 2012. 2.20pm – 4.00pm.

Note: All three workshops were transcribed. This appendix gives an excerpt from the third workshop where the group was prioritizing areas of concern and deciding on what areas they would work on. The transcript gives a flavour of the interaction that took place between the participants in the workshop and how the actions were extrapolated from the evaluation of the school. The words spoken by the facilitator are in black while the participants' words are in blue.

Brian: We won't have all of the answers today but what I want you to do is to look at the two lists and we are going to pick out five things that are the five critical things that we need to put in place. Like, we need to have a consistent discipline policy and you might say, well that is one we need to focus on. There might be a lot of overlaps, so we might need to put two or three of them together.

All look at flipchart

The Critical Challenges	
1. Planning	Resources Information Cuntas Míosúil
2. Discipline	Consistent Communication Update Policies (notes for lateness ...etc)
3. Mentoring	Team Training / Whiteboards New teachers
4. Marketing	Enrolment Improving building Website

The top three could probably go together.

Okay. So what would you put as a heading for that?

Sharing of... Planning... Resources... Information... Group planning... Sharing of ideas... cuntas míosúil...

Okay. So that is one; anything else? If we were to try to develop that calm school that we talked about, where we are growing and growing what else would we need to focus our efforts on?

The discipline thing... It's a small thing, but we need to revisit it... I think it's more that we need to just have a look at it... Communication... Update policies... Notes and things... All of that would come under that wouldn't it... Lateness... Everybody needs to be consistent... That is the word, consistency... It benefits everybody... If there is consistency across the board then you don't have parents coming in saying it wasn't like this last year and they can nearly make it personal then... The rules are always there and it's just a matter of being consistent...

Can anybody else see a group of things? What about the mentoring?

Mentoring is something that came up last week. I know I brought it up. People seemed keen on it last week.

Mentoring... Training of new teachers... What you said, about marketing the school... Selling the school... Increased enrolments for the children because we have Two classes going out and we want to classes coming in... And improving the building as well... That will lead into that yes...

3 min to go. I want one more area.

We want higher expectations... Higher expectations in general... That place would look better... Have higher standards... Like you were saying in other areas as well as a general...what about the website?

Yes. The website is a big one. It's the first place everyone looks now isn't it?

Yes you could have other things on the website as well, and the code of discipline. Yes. Yes. Even if we had a creative writing competition there could be entries typed in and pulled up there.

One thing about the website, I would be reluctant to do mad dash, because it's just going to be (name deleted). He has the code at home on his laptop and we can't just say here you go. I know you do the Facebook site... as well but someone should take it on with him as well, rather than saying "here you go ... here's 5000 pages of typing for you".

The Facebook page has a lot of subscribers and if somebody types stuff out or writes stuff up and hands it to me I will put it up no problem.

But not even yourself and (name deleted). But we could spread it out a bit so that everybody does a bit. Like I would do a bit on the sports and (name deleted) could do a bit on the Math's she's doing or someone else do a bit on the art she does, rather than having ... doing all of the Facebook. We could send a note home to parents and ask them to do up a little testimonial and put that on school website.

Yes. It would be like trip advisor here.

That is four; we could leave it at four. Is there anything else?

The whiteboards. The interactive whiteboards, because I know when I go back into a class, because I haven't used them, and to use them to their full potential...

Yes. Yes. That's up there under training. Put I.T. on it.

Yes. I suppose that does coming under training there. I know it is one of the things that people want to do on the extra hours when we finished this project, is to get somebody in and we have somebody who will come in to do with the white board work. Yes, even the best person in the school at whiteboards is still going to learn from these people who come in because they are just so good you know.

A question I will ask you in conclusion is this. If we tackled all of these four things and if we said let's put all of our efforts into those would we improve the place? How much of that 20% (improvement) would we get back? if we successfully tackled them?

10% any way, I would say. That is a huge job. You are not going to do any of that any way quickly. Some of this can be done quickly but to get it done successfully will take a long time.

That would lift everything. The discipline would lift the children's involvement in the school. The mentoring and the planning would raise our enjoyment of our profession and the marketing would raise the parental perception of the school.

So from now on what we will do is, we will have one more session, where we plan and we will set up committees. Now, it will be done through the Croke Park agreement so instead of thinking "oh, we have to do something for a couple of hours", we are now doing something that is going to help create the vision that we have decided we want; that is rooted in the mission of the school; that is going to meet the needs of the stakeholders, so it should be much more meaningful. They are your ideas, so it's not just somebody coming in here telling you what to do. I know I am coming in but I am only facilitating. You are coming up with your own ideas. So they are your plans and you will implement them to make your teaching life a lot better, hopefully. So for each of these, we will need four committees. We will have four leaders and basically each group will come up with a plan and at the next session they will sit down, and I will help you out as well, and we will come up with a plan on how we will improve these things. Then we will go and implement them. Some of them are short-term as you were saying, some of them will be medium-term and others might take a longer time. There is nothing really there that couldn't be done fairly quickly, so that we bring about change and small little incremental steps. Does that sound like a good idea?

Yes. Yes.

Very good, thank you very much.

**Appendix N: Completed planning sheet for Project
Mathematics**

Planning Sheet

Project Title: Project Maths		Project team: Name deleted	
Short description of project: This project is about the project maths teachers familiarising themselves with the resources available to teach project maths and to produce teaching guidelines so that anyone teaching the subject for the first time will have a resource to help him/her.		Time Frame: School year 2012/13	
Vision of success for the project: That the teachers will be competent in the use of resources to teach the subject			
Objectives: (SMART) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to examine the available resources for teaching new project maths 2. to categorize the resources according to subject maths 3. develop teaching guidelines for teaching eight topics of the syllabus 4. to organize the shared folders in maths so that all teachers can access the resources. 			
What we will do... <p>The resource available to teach project maths were identified and examined by the teachers of project maths. They were sorted and categorized according to eight topics. Each teacher took two topics and produced teaching guides to teach that topic.</p> <p>The shared folder is not in organized in an efficient way and it was decided to organize it in such a way that it can be accessible to everyone.</p>			
Project accomplishment	Steps (Action)	Responsibility (Name)	Status
First step	Initial meeting to discuss and analyze all the resources associated with the new project maths (pm) syllabus	All	Completed
50%	All resources were then categorized in relation to each chapter in the text book	All	Completed
75%	Each member worked on two topics from the syllabus and produced a teaching guide on the use of the resource Set up sub folders on shared drive to allow all staff to share and use maths resources, class tests, subject plans, games, puzzles, worksheets	All All	Completed ongoing
100%	Each member will evaluate the resources they have used and these evaluations will be available on the shared drive	All	By the end of May